NATION

Veteran journalist and author Mark Tully no more

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

India pivots crude sourcing for certainty

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

India chase down 154 in 10 overs; Abhishek Sharma joins record books

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Happy 77th REPUBLIC DAY

After 18 years, India & EU to announce FTA on 27 Jan

The pact will reduce import duties on 90% of goods traded

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

India and the European Union are set to announce on 27 January the conclusion of negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA) aimed at boosting economic ties amid disruptions in global trade caused by US tariffs, an official said. The talks, which began in 2007, are nearing completion after 18 years.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal described the deal as the "mother of all agreements" India has signed. The closure will be formally announced during the India-EU Summit in New Delhi, attended by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa. The FTA will be signed on a mutually agreed date after legal vetting. Implementation requires EU Parliament approval, while in India only Union Cabinet approval is needed.

European Union Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic meets Union Minister Piyush Goyal in New Delhi on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

The pact will reduce or eliminate import duties on over 90 per cent of goods traded, with immediate duty cuts for labour-intensive sectors such as textiles and footwear, and phased reductions for others. Sensitive items like certain agricultural products are excluded. The FTA also aims to liberalise trade in services such as telecommunications, transport, accounting, and auditing. India's bilateral trade with the EU in 2024-25 stood at USD 136.5 billion in goods and USD 83.1 billion in services, making the bloc India's largest goods trading partner. India's exports include petroleum products, electronics, textiles, machinery, chemicals, iron and steel, gems and jewellery, pharma, auto parts, footwear, and coffee. Major imports include machinery, electronics, aircraft, medical devices, gems, chemicals, and plastics. The EU, with a GDP of USD 20 trillion and population of over 450 million, is a major trade and investment partner. The FTA is expected to help Indian exporters diversify away from China and mitigate the impact of US tariffs. *—PTI*

SC task force says academic pressure is driving suicides

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

A Supreme Court-appointed national task force (NTF) has flagged mounting academic pressure and weak mental health systems in higher educational institutions as key drivers of student suicides.

Headed by retired Justice Ravindra Bhat, the NTF surveyed 12.8 lakh students, 1.6 lakh faculty members, 2.26 lakh parents and 16,750 HEIs in 2025. Suicides were the second-highest cause of death among men and the leading cause among women aged 15–29. NCRB data recorded about 13,000 student suicides in 2022.

The report said students from SC, ST, OBC, PwD, rural, non-English-speaking and women backgrounds were particularly vulnerable. Although equal opportunity cells and internal complaints committees are mandated, they often "exist only on paper", it said.

Even where such bodies exist, they lack independence and authority, with cases suppressed and proceedings biased, discouraging students from seeking redress. Ragging continues under the guise of "bonding exercises".

Students flagged rigid attendance rules, unplanned curricula, faculty shortages, opaque placements and reliance on guest faculty. Research scholars cited high demands, financial stress and uneven supervision. About 65 per cent of institutes lacked on-campus mental health professionals.

Based on the findings, the Supreme Court on 15 January ruled that safe, inclusive and responsive campuses are a constitutional obligation. It directed the NTF to frame model SOPs for well-being audits and mental health services, extending its tenure till 30 June. *—Agencies*

FIR after selfie brigade disrupts R-Day rehearsal

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Delhi Police has registered an FIR and initiated legal action after some members of the public disrupted the Republic Day parade rehearsal by clicking photographs, recording videos and taking selfies, officials said on Sunday. A senior police officer said that a video of the matter came to the notice of the police, showing people interfering with the rehearsal at the parade venue. Such actions pose a serious risk to the safety of the participants as well as to the public present at the site, the officer said. The officer also urged the spectators not to disrupt the parade. *—PTI*

Ryots march from Nashik to Mumbai over demands

NASHIK, 25 JAN

Thousands of farmers and labourers began a foot march from Nashik to Mumbai to protest for land rights, irrigation, and uninterrupted power supply. Led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Akhil Bharatiya Kisan Sabha, protesters carried red flags, accusing the government of broken promises. They threatened to gherao Mumbai's Mantralaya if demands were unmet. CPI(M) Polit Bureau member Ashok Dhawle and CITU VP DL Karad are among marchers. The protest includes issues like the Forest Rights Act, land rights under PESA, irrigation schemes, and minimum support prices for soybean and maize. Traffic in Nashik was disrupted during the march. *—PTI*

WhatsApp chats not pvt? Meta sued over 'false' encryption claims

SAN FRANCISCO, 25 JAN

An international group of WhatsApp users has sued Meta Platforms Inc in the United States, alleging the company misled users by falsely claiming that messages on the platform are protected by end-to-end encryption and inaccessible to Meta itself.

The lawsuit was filed on Friday in a US District Court in San Francisco, according to a Bloomberg report, challenging Meta's long-standing assurances that WhatsApp messages can only be read by the sender and recipient.

End-to-end encryption has been central to WhatsApp's privacy pitch. Inside the app, users are told that "only people in this chat can read, listen to, or share" messages and that encryption is enabled by default. The plaintiffs argue these assurances do not reflect how the service operates.

According to the complaint, Meta and WhatsApp "store, analyse, and can access virtually all of WhatsApp users' purportedly private communications". The filing accuses the company of defrauding users worldwide by marketing

PHOTO: FREEPIK

WhatsApp as a private messaging platform.

The plaintiffs include users from Australia, Brazil, India, Mexico and South Africa. They claim Meta stores user communications and that company employees can access them. The complaint also refers to unnamed "whistleblowers" who allegedly helped uncover these practices. Meta has rejected the allegations, calling the lawsuit baseless. "Any claim that people's WhatsApp messages are not encrypted is categorically false and absurd," Meta spokesperson Andy Stone said in an email cited by Bloomberg, adding that WhatsApp has used end-to-end encryption based on the Signal protocol for a decade.

The plaintiffs have sought class-action certification. *—Agencies*

COURT ACQUITS MEDHA PATKAR IN DEFAMATION CASE

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

A Delhi court has acquitted social activist Medha Patkar in a crimwinal defamation case filed by Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena over her remarks during a television programme in 2006, saying that he had failed to place on record the original recording device or the complete video footage capturing the alleged objectionable comments.

In the absence of legally admissible evidence establishing publication of defamatory statements by Patkar, the court acquitted her of the charge under Section 500 of the IPC.

The complaint said Patkar had claimed that Saxena and his NGO had received civil contracts connected to the Sardar Sarovar project.

Saxena, then president of the National Council for Civil Liberties, had denied the allegations that he and his NGO received civil contracts linked to the Sardar Sarovar Project.

"The only document capable of proving that the accused made the impugned statements would be the original electronic device in which the statements were recorded," Judicial Magistrate First Class Raghav Sharma said. *— PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

Now, Adani & Embraer to make commercial planes

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Adani Group and Brazilian aerospace major Embraer are set to announce next week plans to establish a final assembly line for commercial aircraft in India, marking a significant push to build civilian planes domestically.

A memorandum of understanding will be signed by executives of Adani Defence and Aerospace and Embraer in the presence of Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu on January 27 in New Delhi, sources said. The facility will assemble Embraer commercial jets with seating capacity of up to 150 passengers.

PHOTO: EMBRAER

India is among the world's fastest-growing civil aviation markets, with airlines rapidly expanding fleets. With the proposed final assembly line, Adani Group will formally enter aircraft manufacturing in the country.

Sources said that after the assembly line becomes operational, Adani is also likely to begin manufacturing aircraft components in India. In a joint media invitation, the companies described the announcement as "a historic development in India's commercial aviation Make in India journey".

Embraer has been stepping up its India focus and opened a new office in the national capital in October 2025. It currently has nearly 50 aircraft operating in the country.

The manufacturer estimates India will need at least 500 aircraft in the 80–146 seat category over the next 20 years. The government is also moving to boost civilian aerospace manufacturing and maintenance nationwide in India. *—PTI*

ON R-DAY EVE

Achuthanandan, Dharmendra among 131 Padma winners

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Former Kerala chief minister and veteran Communist leader VS Achuthanandan and legendary actor Dharmendra are among those named for the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian honour, to be conferred posthumously in 2026, the government announced on Sunday.

In all, 131 Padma awards have been announced for 2026, comprising five Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan and 113 Padma Shri honours. The Padma Shri list includes two duo cases, where awards to two individuals are counted as one.

Besides Achuthanandan and Dharmendra, the Padma Vibhushan awardees include former Supreme Court judge KT Thomas (public affairs), Hindustani classical musician and violinist N Rajam (art), and eminent Malayalam journalist P Narayanan (literature and education).

The Padma Bhushan has been awarded to playback

singer Alka Yagnik; former Uttarakhand chief minister Bhagat Singh Koshyari; actors Mammootty and Vijay Amritraj; banker Uday Kotak; gastroenterologist Kallipatti Ramasamy Palaniswamy; US-based oncologist Nori Dattatreyudu; social worker S K M Maeilanandhan; Shatavadhani R Ganesh for Avadhanam bhajan; and Vellappally Natesan, general secretary of SNDP Yogam and SN Trust.

Among the Padma Shri awardees are DRDL aerospace scientist Chandramouli Gaddamanugu, who led the Akash missile system from development to deployment during Operation Sindoor, and ISRO scientist A E Muthunayagam, who spearheaded the cryogenic propulsion programme. Also honoured with the Padma Shri are Satyanarayan Nuwal, founder of India's first licensed private defence manufacturing company, actors R Madhavan, Prosenjit Chatterjee, Arvind Vaidya, Anil Kumar Rastogi and Gadde Babu Rajendra Prasad, entrepreneur Ashok Khade, agri scientist Ashok Kumar Singh, and Dalit author Asok Kumar Haldar. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 3 & 5

8 WIN PADMA AWARDS FROM KARNATAKA

Eight distinguished individuals from across India have been honoured with Padma awards this year. Padma Bhushan was awarded to centenarian Shatavadhani R Ganesh (Arts) for his lifetime dedication to cultural enrichment and artistic excellence. The Padma Shri went to seven individuals: Anke Gowda M (Social Work), founder of Pustakamane, India's largest personal free-access library; SG Susheelamma (social work), founder of Sumangali Seva Ashrama; Prabhakar Kore (Literature & Education), leader of the Karnataka Lingayat Education Society; Shashi Shekhar Vempati (Literature & Education), former CEO of Prasar Bharati; Dr Suresh Hanagavadi (Medicine), founder of the Karnataka Hemophilia Society; TT Jagannathan (Trade & Industry, posthumous), former head of the TTK Group; and Shubha Venkatesh Iyengar, recognised for her contributions to social work and public service.

>>>More on Pages 2

982 police and paramilitary personnel honoured

Over 982 personnel from police, fire, home guard, civil defence, and the CBI have been awarded gallantry. The decorations include 125 gallantry medals with Jammu and Kashmir personnel receiving the highest number at 33, followed by Maharashtra Police at 31, Uttar Pradesh Police 18, and Delhi Police 14.

Thirty-one Maharashtra officers from Gadchiroli were recognised for bravery in Naxal-affected areas,. CRPF received 12 gallantry citations. The list also includes 101 President's Medals for Distinguished Service and 756 Medals for Meritorious Service Notable awardees include Mumbai Police DCP Balkrishna Yadav, ACP Cyrus Boman Irani, Inspector Generals Rajiv Jain and Sudhir Hiremath

RG KAR RAPE CBI OFFICER GETS MEDAL

V Chandrasekhar, Joint Director of the CBI, has been awarded the President's Medal for Distinguished Service on the 77th Republic Day. A 2000-batch IPS officer from the Gujarat cadre, Chandrasekhar supervised the investigation into the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College.

INDIA A MESSENGER OF PEACE IN WAR-RIDDEN WORLD: PREZ

Amid global tensions, President Droupadi Murmu said India is spreading peace to secure humanity's future. In her Republic Day eve address, she cited Operation Sindoor's precision strikes against terror, while highlighting women empowerment, Vande Mataram and India's growing economy, amid conflicts worldwide; she urged harmony globally.

Revanna's arrest was as per law, didn't interfere: CM

Says JD(S) will not form govt, asks if BJP will share power

MYSURU, 25 JAN

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah strongly dismissing claims by the JD(S) claims that it would return to power and seek political revenge ***PHOTO: PTI***

- Responding to claims of political vendetta, CM said, "Not only Revanna's case, we don't interfere in any case," adding the government had given a free hand to police

State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday asserted that the arrest of JD(S) MLA HD Revanna was carried out strictly in accordance with the law and without any government interference, while strongly dismissing claims by the JD(S) that it would return to power and seek political revenge.

Revanna, a former minister and son of former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, was arrested for allegedly abducting a woman who had accused his son, former Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, of rape. Responding to allegations of political vendetta, Siddaramaiah said, "Not only Revanna's case. We don't interfere in any case," adding that the Congress government had given a free hand to the police to investigate and file charges based on complaints.

Rejecting claims that officials were given gifts to "fix" the case, the Chief Minister said, "All these charges are false. Who will give gift?" He also said the police team probing the Prajwal Revanna case was rewarded for professional work, and dismissed JD(S) allegations as political rhetoric.

Calling the JD(S) a "spent force", Siddaramaiah said the party, with just 17 MLAs, had no ability to cross the halfway mark of 112 seats. "I wonder how 17 JD(S) MLAs can form a government," he said, questioning whether the BJP would ever allow JD(S) to lead a government even within the NDA. He added that the Congress, which won 136 seats and now has 140 members, would return to power in the 2028 Assembly elections, with the leadership decision to be taken by the party high command.

On governance, Siddaramaiah said budget preparations would begin from 2 February, and highlighted State's positive response at the World Economic Forum in Davos, citing skilled manpower and investment potential.

Responding to questions on Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's conduct during the 22 January joint session, Siddaramaiah said Article 163 mandated the Governor to read the government-prepared address.

He also said the State had written to the Centre seeking inclusion of Karnataka's tableau in the Republic Day parade, rejecting BJP claims to the contrary. *—Salar News*

World views India through B'luru, DKS after WEF visit

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

DCM DK Shivakumar with BDA Chairman NA Haris addressing media after returning from Davos, in Bengaluru on Sunday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

"The world now views India through Bengaluru", State Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said on Sunday, after returning from the World Economic Forum summit in Davos, citing global confidence in the country's growth and youth.

Speaking to reporters here, he said India is the fastest growing country, adding that world leaders see India through the City, which hosts offices of most Fortune 500 companies.

He said chief ministers from ten states, including Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Jharkhand and Assam, attended the summit alongside several heads of government.

Sixty-five countries participated, with global business leaders, including Elon Musk, attending about 100 public meetings where new policies were discussed.

Discussions focused on data centres, global capability centres, food and beverages, aviation, renewable energy, electric vehicles, electronics and India's urbanisation by 2047, especially in the City.

Shivakumar said European infrastructure planning and civic discipline stood out during his road travel through Zurich and Milan, noting decades-old tunnels, traffic sense and respect for law.

The State government, he said, deliberately avoided signing memoranda of understanding at Davos to encourage investors to visit the state and assess resources, clean energy, talent, artificial intelligence and data centre readiness.

Investors showed interest in tier-2 and tier-3 cities to generate local employment and reduce migration to major cities, he said.

He stressed long-term urban mobility planning, calling ring roads compulsory, and said delays like the Peripheral Ring Road should not recur, with notifications to be issued soon.

The development of the City will be prioritised, with Yes Bengaluru launching in February this year. *—PTI*

Gowda awarded Padma Shri for lifelong librarianship

MANDYA, 25 JAN

Veteran book curator Anke Gowda from Karnataka has been selected for the Padma Shri for his lifelong contribution to librarianship. The Centre announced the honour on Sunday.

Born around 1951 into a farming family in Mandya's Chinakurli village, Gowda is best known for establishing Anke Gowda Pustaka Mane (Book House), one of India's largest free-access private libraries that has 20 lakh books in over 20 Indian and foreign languages.

Located at Haralahalli village near Srirangapatna, the library contains rare historical manuscripts dating back to 1832, over 5,000 dictionaries and nearly five lakh rare foreign publications. It is widely used by students, researchers, free of charge.

Gowda, who worked as a bus conductor and as a timekeeper at the Pandavapura Sugar Factory, said he invested 70 to 80 per cent of his earnings and retirement money into the library. He requested the government to provide 10 acres of land for the library. *—PTI*

BENGALURU SCENES

A private bus displays a photo of Lt Col Sofiya Qureshi as a mark of respect in Bengaluru on Sunday. She lead the media briefing on 'Operation Sindoor' in 2025; Volunteers perform Surya Namaskar on Ratha Saptami in Bengaluru on Sunday, celebrating the birth anniversary of Lord Surya and invoking the Sun God's energy for health, vitality, and prosperity; A Red-whiskered Bulbul enjoys a leisurely perch at Kumarakrupa in Bengaluru on Sunday

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

PHOTO: ANI

Maharashtra cops rope in K'taka for Rs 400 cr robbery

BELAGAVI, 25 JAN

The Maharashtra police have sought assistance from the State police in connection with a robbery involving defunct Rs 2,000 denomination currency notes worth about Rs 400 crore, allegedly one of the country's largest such cases.

The incident is said to have occurred on 16 October, 2025, at Chorla Ghat in Khanapur taluk of Belagavi district, but surfaced only on 1 January, 2026, after Sandeep Patil lodged a complaint with the Nashik police.

According to investigators, the cash belonged to Maharashtra-based real estate businessman Kishor Sait and was being transported in two container vehicles from Maharashtra to Goa. Patil alleged that some aides of Sait kidnapped him at gunpoint and forced him to pay the entire amount. He was later released and filed the complaint.

Confirming the development, Belagavi Superintendent of Police K Ramrajan said his department had received a formal request from the Nashik police for assistance.

"With coordination among the Maharashtra and Goa police, the Belagavi police are undertaking a challenging task," he said. Despite the currency no longer being legal tender, Belagavi police have begun preliminary inquiries along the Chorla Ghat road.

Preliminary findings suggest the transporters may have handed over the cash without resistance, with no physical assault reported.

Maharashtra police sources said four persons whave been detained and a search is on for two more suspects.

The case has been handed over to a Special Investigation Team. *—Salar News*

PADMA SHRI: KORE GIVES CREDIT TO KLE FAMILY, FARMERS

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

KLE Society chairman Dr Prabhakar Basavaprabhu Kore expressed delight after being awarded the Padma Shri for his contributions to education, healthcare and rural development. Speaking to reporters, Kore said the honour belonged as much to the institutions and people he worked with as to him personally.

At the helm of the Karnataka Lingayat Education (KLE) Society for over four decades, Kore recalled his journey from

a small village and Kannada medium school, emphasising his focus on bringing quality education and healthcare to north Karnataka's rural areas, where such facilities were once scarce. He credited his achievements to his "KLE family" and farmers, noting that many KLE institutions are located in rural areas to ensure access to education.

Kore's daughter, Preeti Dodwad, described the recognition as "a dream come true" for the family. A former Rajya Sabha member, Kore has overseen the growth of KLE Society from a few institutions to a large network spanning education, healthcare, agriculture and community welfare, transforming the socio-economic landscape of the region. *—PTI*

Moment of joy: Susheelamma on Padma win

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

Dr SG Susheelamma, founder and president of Sumangali Seva Ashrama, has been awarded the Padma Shri for her lifelong contribution to social work and the upliftment of women and children. The Centre announced the honour on Sunday.

A distinguished social worker from Karnataka, Susheelamma has led grassroots initiatives for nearly five decades. Reacting to the award, she described it as a moment of collective joy. "This is a very rare honour. We are all very happy — our staff, members and the 75 children under our care. Many NGOs have also called to congratulate us," she told PTI.

Founded in 1975, Sumangali Seva Ashrama works extensively in education, women's empowerment, child welfare and tribal development. Susheelamma traced the inspiration for her work to her school days, recalling how distributing textbooks to poor children in Class 9 motivated her to dedicate her life to service.

Based in Cholanayakanahalli, Bengaluru, the organisation operates on Gandhian principles and runs anganwadis, schools, vocational training centres, slum development programmes and tribal welfare projects, particularly in Magadi."Commitment is key to sustained social service. When we take a 'Sankalpa', support comes from donors, governments and CSR funds," she said. *—PTI*

OVER VIRAL VIDEO

Three arrested after pharmacist kills self

KARWAR, 25 JAN

Three people were arrested for allegedly abetting the suicide of a pharmacist by circulating a defamatory video about him.

The deceased have been identified as Rajeev Shripada Pikle, 67. He was working at a private hospital owned by his brother in Aversa village of Ankola taluk in Uttara Kannada district.

The accused had shot a video while quizzing Pikle about selling expired medicine to a patient.

The accused confronted Pikle on Friday, accusing him of supplying expired medicines. They allegedly recorded a video of the argument and uploaded it on social media, where it soon went viral.

The accused had shot a video while quizzing Pikle about selling expired medicine to a patient ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

Dr Sanjeev Shripada Pikale, brother of the deceased, told Salar News, "I have filed a complaint against three accused.

On Friday, my brother Rajeev Pikle shot himself at the residence and died."

Police said Dr Pikle looked composed and confident in the video while responding to the charges. But the video went viral and he later came under severe stress and shot himself at his house.

Ankola police said all the three had been apprehended in connection with the incident.

Ankola Police Inspector Chandrashekhar told Salar News, "In connection with the suicide case of Rajeev Pikle, three accused were arrested on Saturday.

They are Anil Naik, 48; Harishchandra Naik, 50, and Subhash Naik, 42. All accused are the residents of Vailawad village in Karwar taluk of the State". *—Salar News*

Ashoka Chakra for Shubhanshu Shukla; Shaurya Chakra for women Navy officers

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, the first Indian to set foot on the International Space Station (ISS), was on Sunday awarded the Ashoka Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry honour.

Shukla became the second Indian in space and the first to visit the ISS during the historic Axiom-4 mission in June last year, 41 years after cosmonaut Rakesh Sharma flew aboard Soyuz-11.

His 18-day mission included advanced experiments that earned recognition from global space experts. Hailing from Lucknow, Shukla was commissioned into the Indian Air Force's fighter stream in June 2006 and has over 2,000 hours of flight experience on aircraft including Su-30 MKI, MiG-21,

MiG-29, Jaguar, Hawk, Dornier and An-32.

On the eve of Republic Day, President Droupadi Murmu approved gallantry awards for 70 armed forces personnel, including six posthumously. These include one Ashoka Chakra, three Kirti Chakra, 13 Shaurya Chakra (one posthumous), one Bar to Sena Medal (Gallantry), 44 Sena Medals (Gallantry), six Nao Sena Medals (Gallantry) and two Vayu Sena Medals.

Two Indian Navy officers, Lieutenant Commanders Dilna K and Roopa A, received the Shaurya Chakra for circumnavigating the globe aboard INSV Tarini, covering 21,600 nautical miles over eight months.

Kirti Chakra recipients include Major Arshdeep Singh, Naib Subedar Doleshwar Subba, and Group Captain Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair, trained for India's Gaganyaan mission.

Shaurya Chakra awardees include Lt Col Ghatage Aditya Shrikumar, Majors Anshul Baltoo, Shivkant Yadav, Vivek Mech, Leishangthem Deepak Singh, Captain Yogendra Singh Thaku, Subedar PH Moses, Baldev Chand (posthumous), Riflemen Manglem Sang Vaiphei and Dhruba Jyoti Dutta. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

J&K CM's advisor made Cabinet Minister

JAMMU, 25 JAN

The Jammu and Kashmir government has granted Cabinet minister status to Chief Minister's advisor Nasir Aslam Wani. The order, issued by Commissioner Secretary of the General Administration Department M Raju on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's instructions, states that Wani will receive a consolidated monthly salary of Rs 80,000. He will also be provided transport by the Motor Garages Department and rent-free residences in Jammu and Srinagar through the Estates Department. A senior National Conference leader, Wani contested the Kupwara Assembly seat unsuccessfully. Appointed as CM Omar Abdullah's advisor on 16 October, 2024, he is a close aide of Abdullah and previously served as State Minister from 2009 to 2014. *—PTI*

M'rashtra polls: 20,718 candidates file nominations

MUMBAI, 25 JAN

Over 20,700 candidates have filed nominations for Maharashtra's upcoming Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti elections, officials said on Sunday. Polls for 12 Zilla Parishads and 125 Panchayat Samitis will be held on 5 February, with counting on 7 February. A total of 7,695 candidates are contesting 731 Zilla Parishad seats, while 13,023 nominations have been filed for 1,462 Panchayat Samiti seats. Kolhapur leads in Panchayat Samiti nominations (1,529), followed by Pune (1,482) and Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (1,456), while Dharashiv tops Zilla Parishad nominations (967). Voting will run from 7.30am to 5.30pm across 25,482 polling stations. The final candidate list will be published on 27 January. *—PTI*

Assam Oppn raises neutrality concerns over roll revision

GUWAHATI, 25 JAN

Opposition parties in Assam on Sunday alleged gross anomalies in the ongoing Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls ahead of Assembly polls and notices being served to genuine voters at the behest of the ruling BJP-led dispensation. They raised objection to CM Himanta Biswa Sarma's public statement, indicating that people of 'Miya' (Bengali-speaking Muslims) community would be harassed during SR exercise, and maintained that such a remark undermines the neutrality of SR. The Congress, CPI(M), Raijor Dal and AJP, in a joint memorandum to the state's Chief Electoral Officer, sought his immediate intervention and prompt action for ensuring free and fair exercise. *—PTI*

Indian products must focus on quality: Modi

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

In his 'Mann ki Baat' radio address on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged industry and start-ups to focus on quality with the aim of making excellence the benchmark in Indian manufacturing. Modi said Indian products should be synonymous with top quality and urged industry to manufacture zero-defect goods in his 130th monthly Mann ki Baat address. "Be it textiles, technology, electronics or even packaging, an Indian product should become synonymous with top quality," he said. Modi also praised young-people in India's start-up journey, which began a decade ago, noting that the country is now the world's third-largest start-up ecosystem, with ventures entering once-unimaginable sectors, he said. The PM also greeted the nation for National Voters Day and Republic Day. *—PTI*

Shibu Soren, Pandey gets Padma Vibhushan

Ram Mandir archaeologists, Veerappan case official bag Padma Shri awards

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Senior BJP leader VK Malhotra, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha founder and former Jharkhand chief minister Shibu Soren, and advertising icon Piyush Pandey have been awarded the Padma Vibhushan posthumously, the government announced on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Padma Shri has been conferred on several distinguished public servants and scholars, including former Ministry of Home Affairs under-secretary RVS. Mani, former Jawaharlal Nehru University vice-chancellor M. Jagadesh Kumar, former Prasar Bharati chief executive Shashi Shekhar Vempati, and archaeologist Budha Krishna Mani, who led key excavations at Ayodhya and Sarnath, the ministry said.

In a strong emphasis on grassroots contribution, 45 individuals have been selected for the Padma Shri under the 'unsung heroes' category. Among them are a 90-year-old tribal musician and a paediatrician who established Asia's first human milk bank.Mumbai-based paediatrician Dr Armida Fernandes, whose initiative significantly improved infant survival rates, features prominently on the list. Others include Bundeli war art trainer Bhagwandas Raikwar from Madhya Pradesh; Bhiklya Ladakya Dhinda, a 90-year-old Tarpa player from Maharashtra; and Jammu and Kashmir social worker Brij Lal Bhat.

Additional awardees include Budri Thati, who set up schools in Naxal-affected areas of Chhattisgarh; Santhali author-composer Charan Hembram from Odisha; Moradabad brass engraving expert Chiranji Lal Yadav; Gujarati folk art exponent Dharmiklal Chunilal Pandya; and Hyderabad-based geneticist Kumarasamy Thangharaj, noted for tracing early human migration from Africa to India.

It was also awarded posthumously to Manipur's 'Nata Sankirtana' exponent Yumnam Jatra Singh, with his family describing it as national recognition of his lifelong cultural and spiritual service.

Separately, K Vijay Kumar, former Director General of the CRPF and head of the Tamil Nadu Police Special Task Force that killed forest brigand Veerappan, was also awarded. *—PTI*

Former Jharkhand chief minister Shibu Soren PHOTO: PTI

ACHUTHANANDAN'S FAMILY WELCOMES POSTHUMOUS PADMA VIBHUSHAN HONOUR

T'PURAM, 25 JAN

Family members of late Marxist veteran and former Kerala Chief Minister **VS Achuthanandan** on Sunday welcomed the posthumous conferment of the Padma Vibhushan, calling it a moment of pride.

"The honour given to my father is very valuable, and we are happy to accept it," his son VA Arun Kumar said, adding that the family is still coming to terms with Achuthanandan's death in July last year at the age of 101.

He said people from across Kerala continue to visit the memorial, reflecting the enduring affection he commanded. "Such recognition gives us happiness," Arun Kumar said.

A founding member of the CPI(M), Achuthanandan championed workers' rights, land reforms and social justice. He served as Chief Minister from 2006 to 2011, was elected to the Assembly seven times and served three terms as Leader of the Opposition.

The Centre announced 131 Padma awards for 2026. *—PTI*

Kerala SIR: CPI(M) writes to CEO over mass inclusion of voters

T'PURAM, 25 JAN

CPI(M) state Secretary **MV Govindan** has written to the Chief Electoral Officer expressing concern over a large number of people being included in the voters' lists.

He said issues have emerged during the special intensive revision (SIR) related to voter inclusion.

Govindan said the list of applicants seeking inclusion in the voters' list has not been published on the website and copies have not been provided to political parties.

"As per Election Commission details, around 26 lakh people have been included in the voters' list. It is doubtful how such a large number of voters are being added when their details cannot be verified," he said. He alleged that over 20,000 voters are being included in each constituency.

He said applications for inclusion in voters' list should be processed only after verification by booth level officers.

"People in large numbers from different parts of the country are being added without any certificates," he said.

Govindan also alleged that UDF and BJP highlighted the Sabarimala issue during the last civic elections to suppress discussion of the government's development and welfare activities. *—PTI*

LDF denies talks with Tharoor

Following speculation about Shashi Tharoor leaving Congress, LDF convener TP Ramakrishnan denied reports of discussing him joining CPI(M) in Dubai. Ramakrishnan said, "We are ready to hold discussions if he changes his political stand." Tharoor had said that he had some issues that would be discussed within the party. While Tharoor and Congress have not commented on these reports, Congress Leader VD Satheesan accused CPI(M) of brutally assaulting party workers in Kannur, who had brought up misappropriation of funds to a CPI(M) MLA. *—PTI*

'Have sleeper cells in DMK, AIADMK, VCK'

MAHABALIPURAM/ MAMALLAPURAM, 25 JAN

TVK Chief Vijay during a meeting with his party officials, in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu, on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

Aadhav Arjun, General Secretary of TVK, made a bold claim on Sunday, saying that his party has 'sleeper cells' within AIADMK, DMK, and even VCK.

Addressing the state and district level consultative meeting of party functionaries in Mahabalipuram, Arjun said, "TVK leader Vijay has got supporters from both AIADMK and DMK party members. We have got a sleeper cell in your cabinet, Mr Stalin. We have got sleeper cells in AIADMK and even VCK."

TVK General Secretary also expressed his confidence that TVK leader Vijay is set to become the next Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. He also drew comparisons between Vijay and former Tamil Nadu chief minister MG Ramachandran (MGR), suggesting that Vijay's political journey mirrors MGR's, who founded the AIADMK party on the belief in the strength of Tamil Nadu's women rather than political alliances.

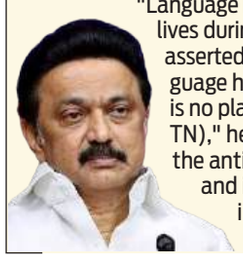
NOT JUST ELECTION, BUT BATTLE: VIJAY

Vijay characterised the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections as a high-stakes "democratic battle" rather than a mere electoral contest, asserting his party's unique position to challenge established political powers.

"What is going to happen now is not just an election; it is a democratic battle. You are the commanders who are going to lead this democratic battle," Vijay told a gathering of TVK cadres.

"Whether it is this evil force or that corrupt force, both should not rule Tamil Nadu. Only we have the guts and the attitude to truly and boldly oppose such parties," said Vijay. *—Agencies*

'No place for Hindi in TN, now & forever'



DMK President and CM **MK Stalin** on Sunday hailed the "Language Martyrs" of the state who sacrificed their lives during the anti-Hindi agitation in the past and asserted that there was "no place" for the language here forever. "Language Martyrs Day; there is no place for Hindi then, now and forever (in TN)," he said in a post. Tamil Nadu, by leading the anti-Hindi agitation, "safeguarded the right and identity of various linguistic national races in the sub-continent," he added. *—PTI*

2026 polls would be DMK's last: EPK

The upcoming Assembly polls in Tamil Nadu will be the "last" for the ruling DMK as it has "earned the wrath" of the people, AIADMK General Secretary **Edappadi K Palaniswami** said on Sunday. Tamil Nadu has become a "battlefield" with all sections of people like government workers, teachers, conservancy workers, nurses holding agitations across the state, he said. Palaniswami alleged that DMK did not even fulfil one-fourth of the poll promises it had made before the 2021 elections. *—PTI*

Tejashwi named RJD working President amid party infighting

PATNA, 25 JAN

RJD Chief Lalu Prasad's younger son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav was on Sunday named the working president of the party at its national executive meeting here.

Yadav's elevation comes after the RJD's drubbing in the recent assembly polls, which the 'Mahagathbandhan' had fought with the 36-year-old leader as its chief ministerial candidate.

In a post on X, the Rashtriya Janata Dal said the decision, which makes clear the line of succession in the party, was taken at its national executive meeting, which was attended by Yadav, Prasad and other senior leaders.

Yadav and his close aides, like Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Yadav, were squarely blamed for the poll debacle by his elder sister Rohini Acharya, who also alleged that when she insisted that accountability be fixed, abuses were hurled at her.

'RJD IN HANDS OF INFILTRATORS'

However, elder sister Acharya criticised the party's leadership, claiming control has fallen into the hands of infiltrators aiming to destroy 'Laluvad'.

She accused these conspirators of misbehaviour and said, "Today, the real command of the party lies in the hands of infiltrators and conspirators sent by opponents." *—PTI*

EAM holds talks with US officials on trade & security

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

External Affairs Minister **S Jaishankar** met with a three-member US Congressional delegation to discuss India-US relations, focusing on trade and security amid ongoing tensions.

US Ambassador Sergio Gor described the talks as "productive" and said the focus was on strengthening partnership in security, trade, and critical technologies.

The delegation, comprising Jimmy Patronis, Mike Rogers, and Adam Smith, is visiting India as negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement progress.

Jaishankar termed the meeting a "good interaction" and highlighted discussions on the Indo-Pacific and Ukraine conflict.

Relations soured after President Trump imposed tariffs on Indian goods, notably a 50 per cent tariff and a 25 per cent levy on Russian oil. *—PTI*

BJP Prez warns party cadres against divisive forces

MATHURA, 25 JAN

BJP National President **Nitin Nabin** on Sunday warned party workers about 'forces' that divide the country and undermine the Constitution, leading to the 2027 Assembly polls. "We must be prepared to fight them politically," Nibin said during his first visit to Uttar Pradesh after being elected the BJP's president.

Addressing a gathering organised to listen to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat' programme in Mathura. "UP has transformed remarkably under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath," Nabin said.

Today, if the UP government is functioning, it is because of the people's votes," he added in a veiled criticism of opposition parties. "That is why I appeal to all workers to strengthen their booths with the 2027 elections in mind," he said, adding that 'Mann Ki Baat' public events would be organised at every booth in the coming months.

Nabin exuded confidence that the BJP would form a government again after the 2027 polls that are expected to be held early next year. *—PTI*

BJP asks Sonia why she met Sabarimala case prime accused

T'PURAM, 25 JAN

Kerala BJP President Rajeev Chandrasekhar called on Sonia Gandhi to reveal the purpose of her meeting with Unnikrishnan Potty, the prime accused in the Sabarimala gold theft case.

During a press conference, he displayed a photograph of Gandhi with Potty and questioned the meeting's agenda, alleging it took place when Sonia Gandhi was Congress president and Oommen Chandy was Kerala's Chief Minister. He demanded an explanation from Congress, accusing the party of endorsing Potty's activities. He claimed that CM Pinarayi Vijayan had also met Potty but offered no explanation.

He further alleged that both Vijayan and Congress promoted Potty, linking the gold theft to a 15-year pattern. He criticised the appointment of former Upa Lok Ayukta Justice Babu Mathew P Joseph as Ombudsman, arguing it violated the Kerala Lok Ayukta Act. *—PTI*

NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY

Shun allurement, employ wisdom while casting votes, says Murmu

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

President Droupadi Murmu; Prime Minister Narendra Modi; Congress leader Rahul Gandhi PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday urged citizens to exercise their right to vote with wisdom, free from allurement, prejudice and misinformation, saying India's democratic strength lies in the spirit of participation.

Addressing the 16th National Voters' Day event, she said voting is both a constitutional right and duty. "Voting is not merely a political expression; it reflects citizens' faith in the democratic process," the President said, lauding women voters for high turnout and noting efforts to ensure that "no voter is left behind". She recalled Election Commission (EC) was established on 25 January, 1950.

PM'S MESSAGE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said being a voter is "not just a constitutional privilege, but an important duty". He described voters as the "Bhagya Vidhata" of India's development journey and urged young and first-time voters to participate actively.

OPPN'S CONCERNS

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said institutions like the EC have faced sustained pressure. He alleged that "vote chori" and an unplanned Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls undermine democratic values.

RAGA TALKS ON AIR POLLUTION

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said air pollution is exacting a heavy price on public health and economy, with children, the elderly and daily wage earners suffering the most.

MAMATA'S CRITICISM

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee termed EC National Voters' Day celebrations a "tragic farce", accusing it of eroding democratic rights through the SIR of electoral rolls in state. *—PTI*

Bengal Minister Shashi Panja get SIR hearing notice

KOLKATA, 25 JAN

West Bengal minister Shashi Panja, who received a hearing notice under the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleged that the exercise was being carried out "in haste."

She also claimed that her name had figured on the voters' list in 2002 and asserted that the notice was served as she was marked "unmapped".

Panja said she would not seek any privileges as a Minister during the process.

"It is clear that the SIR exercise is being done in a hurry and with a lack of preparedness.....But many people in Bengal are being harassed," the minister said.

TMC leader Debangshu Bhattacharya and his family members, whose names had featured in the 2002 voetrs' list, also received the SIR notices. Bhattachrya alleged that the "BJP was using an AI-based system to track social media activity and selectively targeted those who opposed the party". *—PTI*

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Five killed in Hyderabad furniture shop fire

HYDERABAD, 25 JAN

A devastating fire at a four-storey furniture shop in Nampally killed five, including two children and an elderly woman. Firefighters rescued five trapped in the basement, where bodies were retrieved, suspected to have died from asphyxiation. The cause is under investigation; a case has been filed against the shop owner. The Telangana Fire Department revealed stored materials included furniture, chemicals, plastics, and foam, with rescue hampered by thick smoke and blocked access. The government assured support for victims' families and ordered action against safety violations. —*PTI*

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Palash Muchhal files Rs 10 cr defamation case

MUMBAI, 25 JAN

Music composer and filmmaker Palash Muchhal has sent a legal notice to a Marathi actor, seeking Rs 10 crore in damages for defamation over the latter's allegations of cheating. Vidnyan Mane, a 34-year-old actor-producer, approached the police in Maharashtra's Sangli district, alleging that Mucchal had cheated him of Rs 40 lakh. Muchhal's lawyer, Shreyansh Mithare, claimed that no money had come to the composer-filmmaker. The allegations are totally baseless and made with the intention to defame Palash Muchhal, his lawyer said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Odia singer and composer Abhijit Majumdar, 54, dies

BHUBANESWAR, 25 JAN

Odia music composer and singer Abhijit Majumdar died on Sunday while at AIIMS Bhubaneswar, hospital authorities said. He was 54. Majumdar was admitted on 4 September 2025 with hypertension, hypothyroidism and chronic liver disease. After a long treatment in the ICU, he was shifted to the medicine ward on 10 November, AIIMS said in a statement. He developed an infection on 23 January. he did not respond to treatment, developed refractory septic shock and died. Abhijit Majumdar, who composed music for numerous blockbuster Odia films and gave voice to several hit songs, has a fan following across Odisha. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Leader of the Opposition Naveen Patnaik and several others expressed deep grief over the demise of Abhijit Majumdar. —*PTI*

2 having breakfast killed as car hits Udaipur food cart

UDAIPUR, 25 JAN

A speeding car struck a roadside food cart, killing two men who were having breakfast near the Bank of Baroda in Ambamata. The vehicle hit the cart and the men, Abdul Majid and Mohammad Imran, both tailors from Chhipa Colony, before overturning. The driver fled immediately. Angry locals protested and blocked traffic before police dispersed them and sent the bodies for post-mortem. A search for the driver is underway, and investigations continue. —*PTI*

Law without compassion is tyranny, says CJI

'Drug abuse needs action, not rhetoric'

PANAJI, 25 JAN

Law without compassion becomes tyranny and compassion without law becomes chaos, the Chief Justice of India, Surya Kant, said on Sunday.

Addressing the concluding function of the 30-day special awareness campaign of the Goa State Legal Service Authority on drug abuse, he said one should recognise that substance abuse is not merely a crime, but a social, psychological and medical one which requires consultative action and not retributive rhetoric.

The month-long campaign on drug abuse has clearly managed to capture this ethos, he added.

"I would also like to speak about the crucial interplay of the legal system and social change. In the last four decades, I have watched the evolution of our justice delivery system. I have seen it recognise that law without compassion becomes tyranny and compassion without law becomes chaos," the CJI asserted.

"The campaign against drug abuse has spoken to students without speaking down to them. The campaign has sensitised people without instilling fear," he pointed out.

Referring to the video that was played during the event, which showed rehabilitated youths, the CJI said it has given a voice to those whom society had written off. Their testimony is more powerful than any pamphlet at this stage, he emphasised.

"Drug abuse does not arrive with noise or warning. It slips quietly into our homes and classrooms. Drug abuse ruins not only individuals but society too," the CJI said.

Speaking about Goa, he said the state's spirit is embedded not only in the buildings and street corners, but in every citizen and resident, all of whom seem to carry the Goa DNA of resilience and beauty.

"This is what Goa stands for. For preservation, heritage, and pride in our identity," the CJI said. — *PTI*

Couple jumps from UP pizza outlet to escape Hindutva men

SHAHJAHANPUR, 25 JAN

Police booked eight men after a man and a woman jumped from the second floor of a pizza outlet in Shahjahanpur when members of a Hindutva group allegedly accosted them, officials said on Sunday.

The FIR was registered against three named individuals and five unidentified persons in connection with the incident that took place on Saturday.

Police said the couple was sitting at the pizza outlet near the Bareilly turn in the Kant police station area, when seven to eight men belonging to a Hindutva group allegedly entered the premises and began demanding their identity cards.

SP Rajesh Dwivedi said that the injured man, Vishal, a resident of Puwayan, alleged in his complaint that the group misbehaved with them and started making videos.

The woman jumped out of a window from the second floor, and Vishal followed in an attempt to save her, the SP said. Both were injured seriously and are in hospital.

Police booked Pravesh, Sonu and Harshit, and five unidentified persons afterb receiving a complaint. — *PTI*

IMD WARNING

Isolated heavy rain likely in TN, air better in Delhi

CHENNAI, 25 JAN

The IMD issued an isolated heavy rainfall warning in Tamil Nadu on Sunday. Moderate rain accompanied by lightning is likely to lash Chennai and its neighbourhood. Meanwhile, Delhi air turned cleaner on Sunday, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) at 150 at 9 am

The daily weather report from the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) here says that isolated heavy rain is likely in Chengalpattu, Tiruvannamalai, Salem, Namakkal, Kallakurichi, Villuppuram, Cuddalore, Thanjavur and Ramanathapuram districts and Puducherry.

The IMD says that dry weather is expected to return from 27 January. The minimum temperature was recorded at 6.6 degrees Celsius, about 0.9 lower than normal.

Meanwhile, Delhi breathed cleaner air in the morning, with an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 150 at 9 am in the "moderate" category, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The AQI dropped to the "moderate" category for the first time in over three and a half months on Saturday. Pollution levels in the city dropped after rain on Friday.

Night temperatures remained below the seasonal average, according to the IMD.

The Srinagar-Jammu NH was restored partially on Sunday after remaining closed for two days due to heavy snowfall. Flights to and from Srinagar have not been affected by the weather. — *PTI*

NEET student's death: Semen seen on clothes, cops suspended

PATNA, 25 JAN

Jan Suraaj founder Prashant Kishor meets the family members of the NEET student who died suspiciously in a girl's hostel in Jehanabad ***PHOTO: ANI***

Police investigating the death of a NEET student in Patna said the forensic report of the student's clothes has detected traces of semen, a finding that suggests sexual assault.

Police will obtain a DNA profile from the traces of semen, officials said.

Meanwhile, Patna Police suspended Hemant Jha, Additional Officer-in-Charge of Kadamkuan Police station and the Officer-in-Charge of Chitragupt Nagar police station, Sub-Inspector, Roshni Kumari on Saturday for dereliction of duty in the case.

The 18-year-old student who was preparing for NEET, was found unconscious in the room of Shambhu Girls Hostel in Patna's Chitragupt Nagar earlier this month.

She was staying at the private hostel for NEET coaching. She died at a private hospital on 11 January after remaining in coma for days. Her family had said that she was sexually assaulted and accused authorities of a cover-up. A SIT is investigating the case.

A statement issued by the SSP office said, "The forensic report of the student's clothes detected semen in the leggings. These clothes were provided by the family of the victim on 10 January. Now, the SIT will take a DNA profile from the semen. It will also be matched with the DNA profile of the accused arrested and also with other suspects."

The post-mortem report had highlighted injuries to her private parts and nail abrasions on her body. — *PTI*

Mumbai prof stabbed to death in broad daylight

MIRZAPUR, 25 JAN

Alok Kumar Singh ***PHOTO: ANI***

The Government Railway Police (GRP) arrested a 27-year-old daily-wage labourer in connection with the murder of a professor at a crowded railway station here within 12 hours of the crime, an official said on Sunday. The suspect, Omkar Eknath Shinde, was apprehended from the Kurar area. The murder took place on Saturday.

A minor argument between the victim, Alok Kumar Singh, a professor at NM College, and Shinde while they were alighting from a train ended in a brutal attack, the official said.

Shinde, a labourer engaged in metal polishing, stabbed Singh in the stomach on platform No. 1 of Malad railway station and fled. Singh was rushed to a hospital, where he died. The suspect escaped from the spot, but was apprehended with the help of CCTV footage, the official said. Shinde has been arrested under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and further investigation is underway, he added. — PTI

Mirzapur man held for 'conversion racket at gym'

MUMBAI, 25 JAN

The mastermind of a gang involved in the sexual exploitation of women, religious conversion and blackmailing in Uttar Pradesh's Mirzapur district, was arrested from Delhi's IGI Airport on Saturday while attempting to flee abroad with his family.

The accused was identified as Imran, a resident of Mirzapur. He has a chain of gyms called KGM Gym One across the Mirzapur district. Police said that he used to run the racket through his gyms, which were being operated by his relatives.

Police said he was trying to flee to Dubai from Terminal 3 of Delhi's IGI Airport with his family. Immigration apprehended him and handed him over to the Delhi Police. "We had received information that he was trying to flee," Mirzapur SSP/DIG Somen Barma told reporters. — *PTI*

Medha Patkar acquitted due to lack of admissible evidence

- The magistrate held that to determine whether defamatory remarks were made, it is essential to produce the complete video and audio recording of the interview. The court pointed out that petitioner Saxena failed to place on record the original recording device containing the full video footage

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

The Delhi court which acquitted social activist Medha Patkar said that the material on record showed Patkar was not a panellist on the programme cited by Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena in his defamation suit, and that only a brief pre-recorded video clip of her was played during the telecast.

"It is important to note that neither the reporter who actually recorded the audio-video nor any person who had seen the accused making the statements has been examined as a witness. The clip played appears to be a very short clipping from an interview," the judge said.

The magistrate held that to determine whether defamatory remarks were made, it is essential to produce the complete video and audio recording of the interview.

The court noted that Saxena failed to place on record the original recording device or the complete video footage capturing the remarks.

"The only document capable of proving that the accused made the impugned statements would be the original electronic device in which the statements were recorded," the court said, adding that neither the device nor a valid copy was produced.

In another defamation case filed by Saxena, the Supreme Court upheld in August 2025 Patkar's conviction by a trial court but set aside a fine of Rs 1 lakh. — *PTI*

Woman injects ex-lover's wife with HIV, 4 held

KURNOOL, 25 JAN

Four people, including a woman and a nurse, have been arrested in Kurnool for allegedly injecting a doctor with HIV-infected blood, police said on Sunday. The victim is the wife of the main accused's former lover.

The accused were identified as B Boya Vasundhara, 34, Konge Jyothi, 40, a nurse at a private hospital in Adoni, and Jyothi's two children, both in their 20s. They were arrested on 24 January.

Police said Vasundhara, unable to accept that her former partner had married another woman, conspired with the others to harm the victim and separate the couple. The group allegedly obtained HIV-infected blood samples from patients at a government hospital, claiming they were needed for research, and stored them in a refrigerator.

The incident occurred on 9 January at around 2.30pm when the victim, an assistant professor at a private medical college, was returning home on a scooter. Two men allegedly rammed her scooter near Vinayak Ghat. While pretending to help her into an autorickshaw, Vasundhara is said to have injected her before fleeing. The victim's husband lodged a complaint on 10 January. — *PTI*

AC blast triggers fire in hostel, 6 hospitalised

MEDCHAL-MALKAJGIRI, 26 JAN

Six girls were hospitalised after being found unconscious in a fire caused by an air-conditioner blast due to a short circuit at a girls' hostel in Medchal–Malkajgiri district early on Sunday, officials said.

The fire broke out at around 4.40 am at the Nine Education hostel in Alwal. Local residents rushed to the spot and managed to control the flames before fire services arrived. The six girls were shifted to a nearby hospital.

"Today, at around 4:40 am, a fire broke out at Nine Education hostel due to an AC blast. Six girls in a room were found unconscious. The fire was brought under control by locals before the fire services team arrived," a fire services official said. — *ANI*

Goa fire: ED flags Rs 22 cr as laundered crime funds

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

The entities running the Goa-based nightclub, where 25 people were killed in a fire in 2025, generated revenue of Rs 22 crore as "proceeds of crime," the ED said on Sunday.

The revenue earned during the previous two fiscals was suspected to be proceeds of crime as the facility was allegedly being operated without statutory licenses.

The ED had raided the premises of Gaurav and Saurabh Luthra and co-owner of the 'Birch by Romeo Lane' club, Ajay Gupta located in Delhi and Haryana and that of former sarpanch of Arpora-Nagoa Roshan Redkar and ex-panchayat secretary Raghuvir Bagkar in Goa.

A devastating fire broke out on 6 December 2025 at the nightclub in Goa's Arpora village, when it was hosting a dance party. 50 people were injured in the incident.

Funds worth crores generated from the facility, were "diverted" to personal bank accounts and accounts of other group entities. Some of these accounts have been frozen.

The Goa police has arrested eight people in this case, including the Luthra brothers.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant had said that nightclub operated under different names over the years and that his government would probe its violations. — *PTI*

BBC'S 'VOICE OF INDIA'

Mark Tully, the voice India trusted

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

- Mark Tully spent a lifetime in India as a journalist. The renowned journo died in a New Delhi hospital on Sunday at 90

As a child of rich British parents in West Bengal's Tollygunge in the late 1930s, Mark Tully was not allowed to socialise with locals.

But Tully spent a lifetime in India as a journalist and observer. The renowned journalist, author and Indophile breathed his last at a hospital here on Sunday at 90.

Born in 1935 in Tollygunge, Tully studied at a boarding school in Darjeeling before he was sent to England.

In an interview to the BBC in 2001 after he was selected for Knighthood, Tully remembered England as "a very miserable place… dark and drab, without the bright skies of India."

After taking up a theology course at Trinity College in Cambridge, the Brit joined the Lincoln Theological College. But destiny had other things for him.

In an interview to the 'The UNESCO Courier' in 2020, Tully remembered said he studied at the seminary for only two terms.

Tully was reintroduced to India when the BBC sent him as its correspondent to New Delhi in 1964.

He was sent back to London in 1969 after the Indian government barred the BBC from operating in India.

After arriving in Delhi again in 1971, he was made the chief of bureau the next year and was responsible for covering South Asia.

Tully covered the 1971 Bangladesh war, the Emergency of 1975-77, the execution of former Pakistan president Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1979, Operation Blue Star, the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the anti-Sikh riots in 1984, the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, and the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992.

Operation Blue Star and the Punjab problem were in Tully's first book, 'Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi's Last Battle' (1985), written with journalist Satish Jacob. — *PTI*

India to display military might at R-Day parade

New India will display its development journey, cultural diversity and military might, including newly-raised units and mock-ups of major weapon systems deployed during Operation Sindoor, at the 77th Republic Day celebrations on Monday.

The President of the European Council, Antonio Costa, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, will be the chief guests at the event in the national capital.

The overarching theme of the event at the Kartavya Path will be 150 years of 'Vande Mataram'. President Droupadi Murmu will lead the ceremony that will commence at 1030 hours and will last for approximately 90 minutes.

It will start with the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the National War Memorial, where he will lead the nation in paying solemn tributes to the fallen heroes by laying a wreath.

Murmu and the chief guests are expected to arrive at the venue in a 'traditional buggy' that will be escorted by the President's Bodyguard.

Around 100 cultural artistes will be heralding the parade, on the theme 'Vividata Mein Ekta (Unity in Diversity) which is set to be a grand presentation of musical instruments, demonstrating the nation's unity and rich cultural diversity.

Showering of flower petals will be carried out by four Mi-17 1V helicopters of the 129 helicopter unit in the Dhwaj formation.

The parade will then begin with President Murmu taking the salute. The parade will be led by Parade Commander Lt General Bhavnish Kumar, General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area, a second-generation officer.

The proud winners of the highest gallantry awards will follow and the team will comprise Param Vir Chakra winners -- Subedar Major (Honorary Captain) Yogendra Singh Yadav (Retd) and Subedar Major Sanjay Kumar.

Ashok Chakra winners Maj Gen CA Pithawalia (Retd) and Colonel D Sreeram Kumar will also be part of the team.

A small military contingent of the European Union (EU) will also feature in the parade.

For the first time, the parade will showcase a phased 'Battle Array Format' of the Indian Army that will include an aerial component. It will feature a high mobility reconnaissance vehicle and India's first indigenously designed armoured light specialist vehicle.

Providing aerial support would be the indigenous Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopter and its armed version, Rudra, in Prahar formation, demonstrating battlefield shaping, officials said.

The combat elements will then follow with T-90 Bhisma and Main Battle Tank Arjun rolling past the saluting dais with aerial support from Apache AH-64E and Prachand light combat helicopters.

Other mechanised columns will include BMP-II Infantry Combat Vehicle, along with Nag missile system (Tracked) Mk-2.

A tri-services tableau showcasing replicas of major weapon systems deployed by the Indian military during Operation Sindoor in early May is expected to be a major attraction.

The tableau will represent India's resolve to respond decisively to national security challenges.

A glass-cased integrated operational centre, depicting the conduct of Operation Sindoor in brief, will also roll down Kartavya Path. While the Brahmos missile struck deadly blows to the enemy during the operation, the Akash missile systems and S-400 provided a protective shield.

The Indian Navy contingent will comprise 144 young personnel, led by Lt Karan Nagyal as contingent commander, and Lt Pawan Kumar Gandi, Lt Priti Kumari and Lt Varun Dreveriya as platoon commanders.

It will be followed by the Naval tableau that will present a vivid depiction of the theme 'Strong Navy for a Strong Nation'. The tableau depicts a stitched ship from the fifth century CE, now christened as INSV Kaundinya, Gurab class ships of the Maratha Navy, and frontline indigenous platforms, including the aircraft carrier INS Vikrant and INS Udayagiri.

The tableau will also feature a depiction of the circumnavigation route followed by INSV Tarini as part of the Navika Sagar Parikrama-II expedition.

In addition to naval personnel, young cadets from the Sea Cadets Corps, a non-governmental organisation that imparts basic nautical skills to youth in Mumbai, will march alongside the tableau.

The Indian Air Force contingent will comprise four officers and 144 airmen. The contingent commander will be Squadron Leader Jagdesh Kumar with Squadron Leader Nikita Choudhery, Flt Lt Prakhar Chandrakar and Flt Lt Dinesh as supernumerary officers.

Syncing with the marching contingent would be a thrilling fly-past by two Rafale jets, two MiG-29s, two Su-30s and one Jaguar aircraft in 'Spearhead' formation, symbolising the "Sindoor Formation", officials said.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will showcase its hypersonic glide missile LR-AShM. It is capable of engaging static and moving targets and is designed to carry various payloads.

A total of 30 tableaux -- 17 of states and Union Territories and 13 of various ministries and departments -- will roll down the Kartavya Path.

The tableaux will showcase a unique mix of 150 years of the national song Vande Mataram and the nation's rapid progress.

This year, around 2,500 cultural artists drawn from every state and Union Territory will perform on Kartavya Path.

A joint 'Dare Devils' team of motorcycle riders drawn from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) will enthrall the audience.

The aerial fly-past, which is one of the most eagerly-awaited events of the parade, will witness the participation of a total of 29 aircraft, including 16 fighter jets, four transport aircraft and nine helicopters.

These include Rafale, Su-30 MKI, MiG-29 and Jaguar aircraft, complemented by strategic assets - C-130 and C-295, as well as the Indian Navy's P-8i aircraft. The formations include Arjan, Vajraang, Varuna and Vijay. —*PTI*

Indian Army contingent marches during rehearsal for the Republic Day Parade, in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

WHY A PARADE ON R-DAY

The military parade was established as a core element of the first Republic Day in 1950 to symbolise India's victory over colonial rule and the emergence of a new, powerful republic. It allows the nation to project its military might and technological progress to both its citizens and the global community. Beyond military displays, the parade features colourful tableaux from different states and union territories. Each year, India invites a foreign head of state as the Chief Guest. This tradition, which began with Indonesian President Sukarno in 1950, is used to strengthen diplomatic ties

ARMY LEGACIES TO ROLL DOWN KARTAVYA PATH

For Lt Amit Choudhary, a second-generation army officer, who will lead a contingent of mixed scouts in the Republic Day Parade on the Kartavya Path, it will both be a personal milestone and a nostalgic nod to his father who was part of the ceremonial parade in 1990.

Dressed up in characteristic multi-layer suits teamed with special boots and polarised sunglasses meant for high terrain and harsh weather, he and his contingent members on Friday took part in the full dress rehearsal of the parade amid rains.

The young officer from Arunachal Scouts, along with leaders of several other Army contingents, which will be part of the prestigious event here, shared their experiences during a media interaction held on the premises of a military unit near the India Gate, after the rehearsal.

"I have always dreamt of being part of the parade. As a boy, I used to watch the parade on TV, and march in the room at our home. My father was in the Republic Day Parade in 1990, and he was part of the Brigade of the Guards contingent," he said.

Ahead of the interaction, Major General Navraj Dhillon, Chief of Staff, Delhi Area, told reporters on Friday that a "special Army tableau" themed on the Integrated Operation Centre which will "commemorate Operation Sindoor" and depict "our strategic planning process" will also be part of the military display.

Also, a mixed Scouts contingent in operational role, and five other marching contingents of the Army represented by the Rajput Regiment, Assam Regiment, Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry, Regiment of Artillery and Bhairav Battalion, will be part of the parade.

The defence assets that will be showcased will include BrahMos, Akash missile system, Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) system, Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS), Dhanush artillery gun, Shaktiban Regiment, Divyastra Battery, Universal Rocket Launcher System 'Suryastra', unmanned ground vehicles and a static display of some drones, mounted on various platforms.

Marking a first, the contingent members of the mounted 61 Cavalry will be seen in battle gear, and key Army assets, including indigenous platforms accompanied with personnel, will roll down the Kartavya Path in a "phased battle array formation".

A common thread running among many contingent commanders is that multiple generations of their families have served in the armed forces, including fighting in wars.

Capt Samira Z Buttar, who will lead the contingent representing the Integrated Operation Centre, says she is both filled with pride and humbled to receive this honour.

"I am a fourth-generation army officer. My father, grandfather (Brig Sampuran Singh) and great-grandfather, all have served in the army. And, now it's feel special to have the honour to walk the Kartavya Path as part of the parade," she told PTI.

The young officer said, her grandfather had fought in the 1965 war, and received two gallantry awards -- "a Maha Vir Chakra and a Vir Chakra".

"Also, our Integrated Operation Centre tableau is something very unique and it will be a surprise element for spectators on the day of the parade," she said.

Capt Ahaan Kumar, 26, will lead the contingent of the iconic 61 Cavalry at the parade, mounted on his charger 'Ranveer'.

Grandson of a war veteran and son of Lt Gen Bhavnish Kumar, General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area, who will be the Parade Commander, he and his Hanoverian breed steed had played the same role in the 2025 parade too.

"Last year, we wore our ceremonial uniform and carried a sword. This time, we are seen in our battle gear, so it feels like a new experience in this parade too," he told PTI.

Eighteen marching contingents and 13 bands will take part in the parade that will last around 90 minutes.

An animal contingent comprising Zanskar ponies, Bactrian camels, raptors (kites) and Army dogs will also be part of the parade.

Captain Harshita Raghav, who will lead the Remount Veterinary Corps (RVC) contingent, said, "These animals are soldiers of the Indian Army only. In fact, they are the silent warriors."

"Making them operationally ready, and understanding the requirements of operations from these animals are two very important aspects. They are true force multipliers of the Indian Army," she told PTI.

Raghav, a native of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, said her father served in the Indian Air Force, and she is "among the first batch of women officers at the RVC".

Capt Vikas Yadav, a third-generation army officer, who will lead a contingent that will include equipment such as unmanned ground vehicles, is serving in the 4th battalion of 1 Gurkha Rifles.

"These unmanned ground vehicles are used for surveillance and logistics purposes, and can also self-navigate. They can carry mission-oriented payload, and weapons, and can be used for purposes such as bunker busting, where there is a threat to a human or animal combatant's life," he said. —*PTI*

REMOVING MUGHALS FROM TEXTBOOKS IS NONSENSE: HISTORIAN THAPAR

History is a continuous process and cannot be taught in fragments, eminent historian Romila Thapar has said, while calling the practice of removal of entire dynasties such as the Mughals from textbooks as "nonsense".

Speaking online at the ongoing ninth edition of the Kerala Literature Festival (KLF), Thapar on Saturday addressed issues ranging from the rise of popular history on social media to the importance of feminist history and the central role of education in questioning existing knowledge.

"The kinds of things that are happening, where, for example, chunks of history are being thrown out of the syllabus or we are told we don't need to study them, are nonsense. History is a continuous process. It is an evolution of people and cultures, of ways of behaviour and ways of thinking," she said.

"That continuity cannot be broken by saying, 'All right, we throw this dynasty out, we throw Mughals out, we throw out that'.

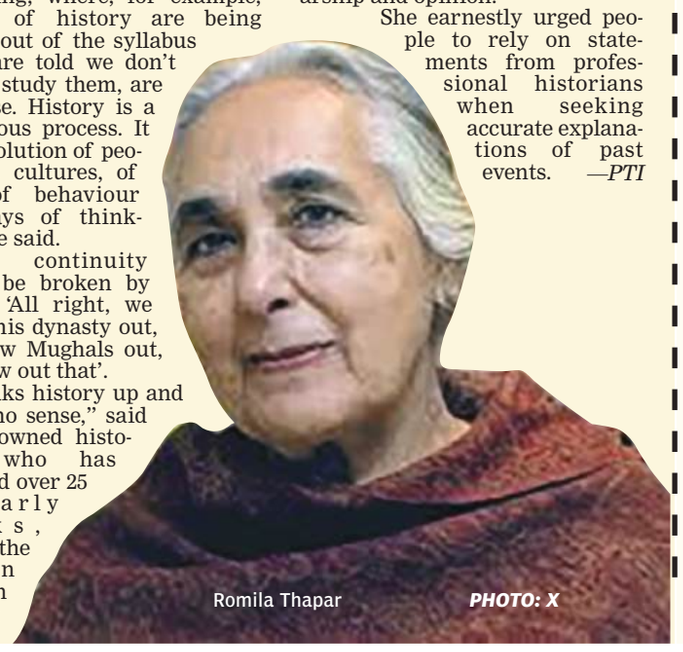
It breaks history up and makes no sense," said the renowned historian, who has authored over 25 scholarly books, during the session "Women Writing History: Three Generations".

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has reportedly revised its Class 7 Social Science textbook for the 2025-26 academic year, removing chapters on the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals.

Besides, it also now focuses on ancient Indian dynasties such as the Mauryas, Shungas, and Satavahanas, along with cultural traditions and sacred sites across religious traditions.

The 94-year-old historian also voiced concern over the growing influence of "popular history" on social media, saying it often blurs the line between informed scholarship and opinion.

She earnestly urged people to rely on statements from professional historians when seeking accurate explanations of past events. —*PTI*



Romila Thapar **PHOTO: X**

NEW INDIA'S VOICES

WILLING TO TRADE CONVENIENCE OF PHONE TO BE FREE OF DISTRACTIONS: WRITER PICO

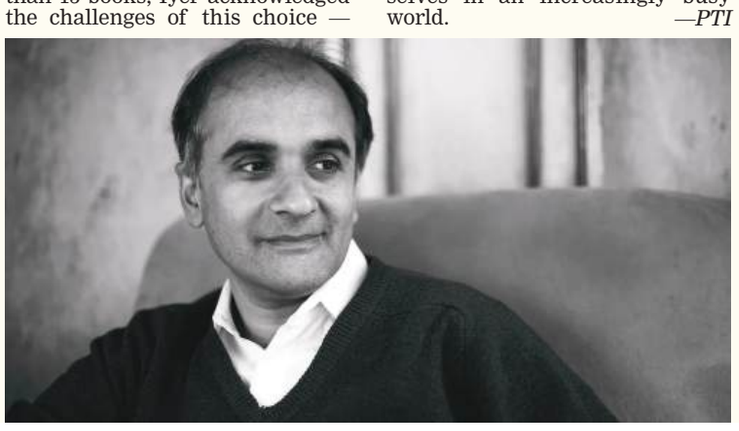
Celebrated travel writer Pico Iyer's life without a mobile phone, media, or constant notifications stands as a striking anomaly in an age tethered to smartphones, where even an hour without a ping can trigger anxiety and FOMO.

Speaking at the Kerala Literature Festival, Iyer reflected on how stepping away from digital noise has allowed him to live more fully in the present. "If someone says they'll meet me at six, I'm there at six — and if they're late, it's my fault for not having a phone," he said. While he does not recommend the lifestyle to others, he is willing to trade convenience for freedom from distraction. "As I'm talking to you, I'm giving myself entirely to you, without anything vibrating in my pocket," he added, noting the same intention guides his marriage.

Now 68, and the author of more than 15 books, Iyer acknowledged the challenges of this choice — even accessing room service via QR codes can be difficult. Yet he is prepared to "pay the price" to avoid becoming "hostage to 600 notifications and news flashes every day".

Phones are not the only thing Iyer avoids. Despite writing for outlets such as Time, The New York Times and The Financial Times, he also lives a largely media-free life. He argues that media often fuels anxiety and outrage while obscuring the bigger picture. During the pandemic, he found constant news consumption overwhelming, drawing attention away from people he could actually help.

Instead, Iyer has embraced silence, meditation and presence. Inspired by the Dalai Lama, who devotes hours daily to meditation despite an intense schedule, Iyer concluded that even ten quiet minutes a day can help us gather ourselves in an increasingly busy world. —*PTI*



HINDI CINEMA HAS LOST ITS ROOTS: PRAKASH RAJ HITS OUT AT 'PLASTIC' FILMS

Unlike Malayalam and Tamil cinema, which he hailed for their strong, content-driven storytelling, actor Prakash Raj said mainstream Hindi cinema has lost its roots, becoming increasingly "fake" and "money-oriented".

Speaking at the ongoing ninth edition of the Kerala Literature Festival (KLF) on Saturday, the award-winning actor criticised Hindi films for their artificiality, saying they have become like a "Madame Tussauds museum" where everything seems beautiful with no substance.

"We (the South) still have stories to tell, the new young directors of Tamil are talking about Dalit issues. And that gives so much of hope," said Raj, renowned for his work across Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Kannada, and Malayalam cinema, in a session titled "The Artist I Became".

The 60-year-old filmmaker-actor further analysed what ails Hindi cinema, tracing its decline to the post-multiplex era, when it began catering primarily to urban audiences.

Raj, known for his performances in hit films such as 'Singham' and 'Wanted', argued that the industry's focus on glamour and surface-level aesthetics has weakened its emotional connection with viewers.

"After multiplexes, the Bombay film industry started making films only for multiplexes. Very cute films and things like that. Because they were running well. They went into that Page 3 culture, and with that lost the touch with rural Rajasthan and Bihar," he explained.

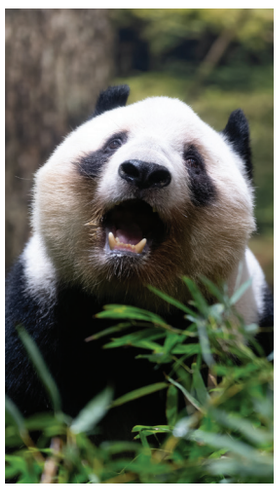
Prakash Raj meets Sunitha Williams at Kerala lit festival **PHOTO: X**

This shift, he argued, also led to the decline of the nation-building narratives that once defined post-independence Hindi cinema.

To buttress his point, Raj cited the 1977 blockbuster 'Amar Akbar Anthony', and its famous scene of three men from different religions donating blood to save one person, reflecting shared values, social harmony and collective aspirations.

"Now, it's not like that anymore. Today, it's all about money and appearances," he concluded. —*PTI*

PANDA FAREWELL



Thousands of visitors queued at Tokyo's Ueno Zoo for a final glimpse of twin pandas Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei before they return to their homeland, China, this week. The pandas are on loan as part of "panda diplomacy," and leave once the loan period ends. Their departure on Tuesday will leave Japan without a panda for the first time in about 50 years. With Tokyo-Beijing relations strained over political, trade and security tensions, the chances of replacements are slim
—SCREENGRAB

22 US states in emergency due to snow

Power outage in over 8L homes, over 14,000 flights cancelled

WASHINGTON DC, 25 JAN

A massive winter storm sweeping across the United States has caused widespread disruption, bringing snow, ice and dangerously cold temperatures to more than 190 million people, according to ABC. Over 22 states have declared emergencies as power outages spread from Texas to Louisiana and flight cancellations mount nationwide.

More than 10,000 flights have been cancelled so far, including all departures and arrivals at Washington's Ronald Reagan National Airport (DCA), ABC reported. Flight disruptions have rippled across major hubs, severely affecting travel in the South, Midwest and Northeast as airlines struggle with hazardous weather conditions.

Power outages have surged sharply, with more than 800,000 homes and businesses left without electricity, as the storm intensified, ABC said.

Utility crews are racing to restore supply, but officials warn that freezing rain, heavy snow and ice accumulation continue to hamper repair efforts across large swathes of the country.

The storm has triggered a dangerous deep freeze in the South, where temperatures have plunged well below seasonal averages. States unaccustomed to prolonged cold are facing icy roads and widespread closures, while emergency shelters have been opened for vulnerable populations. In the Northeast, heavy snowfall is blanketing major cities, disrupting daily life and slowing ground transportation.

ABC said the system, unofficially termed "Winter Storm Fern," is sprawling across more than 1,300 miles, pushing Arctic air deep into the eastern United States.

Weather officials have warned that sub-zero wind chills could persist for several days, raising serious risks of hypothermia and frostbite.

Emergency declarations are now in effect across more than 22 states as authorities coordinate responses at the federal, state and local levels.

Residents have been urged to avoid non-essential travel, conserve power where possible and follow safety advisories as conditions continue to evolve.

With the storm still advancing, officials caution that further disruptions to travel, power and daily life are likely before conditions gradually improve later in the week. *—ANI*

Vehicles in Dallas move on snow-covered Highway 67 during a winter storm on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

- Emergency approved for Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North & South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia

Protests erupt as ICE kills another person

MINNEAPOLIS, 25 JAN

Democrats demanded federal immigration officers leave Minnesota after a US Border Patrol agent fatally shot a man in Minneapolis, triggering protests and clashes with officers in a city already shaken by recent violence.

Family members identified the victim as Alex Pretti, 37, an intensive care nurse who had protested President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown. Hundreds gathered in freezing temperatures, confronting federal officers who used batons and flash bangs. The Minnesota National Guard assisted police under orders from Governor Tim Walz.

Police Chief Brian O'Hara said details preceding the shooting remained limited. The Department of Homeland Security said officers fired "defensive shots" after a man with a handgun approached and resisted disarmament. Bystander videos show Pretti holding a phone, while O'Hara said police believe he was a lawful gun owner with a permit.

DHS Secretary Kristi Noem said Pretti sought to "impede a law enforcement operation" but gave no details. The Border Patrol agent involved is an eight-year veteran.

President Trump blamed Democratic leaders, accusing Walz and Minneapolis officials of "inciting Insurrection." Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez urged cutting funding for ICE, while Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said Democrats would oppose any spending package funding DHS, raising shutdown risks.

Pretti was killed near the site where another man died during an ICE operation 7 January.

His family called official accounts "lies," saying he held only his phone and posed no threat. Authorities said investigations continue as tensions remain high, with calls for accountability, transparency, restraint, and calm across Minneapolis and surrounding communities. *—PTI*

Syria extends Kurdish forces ceasefire by 15 days

RAQQA, 25 JAN

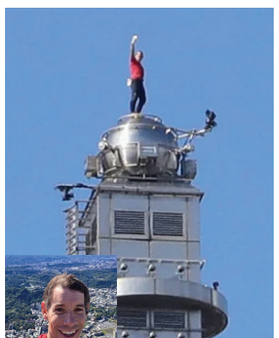
Hours after a four-day truce expired, the defence ministry of Syria on Saturday said the ceasefire with Kurdish-led fighters has been extended by 15 days. The ministry said the move would support a US operation to transfer Islamic State detainees from northeastern Syria to detention centres in Iraq. There was no immediate response from the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Fighting over the past three weeks has seen the SDF lose significant territory. The truce follows a revised agreement signed last weekend requiring SDF members to merge individually into the army and police. The SDF said government troop movements signalled possible escalation but said it would continue to abide by the ceasefire terms. *—PTI*

Indonesian landslide: Search still on for missing

BANDUNG, 25 JAN

Rescuers in Indonesia are battling mud and waterlogged ground in their search for dozens missing from a deadly Java landslide on Saturday, which killed at least 11 people. The landslide on the slopes of Mount Burangrang in West Java buried around 34 houses in Pasir Langu. As of Sunday, 79 residents remain missing. Rescue teams found two dead on Sunday, raising the death toll to 11, according to the search and rescue office. Videos show rescuers using farm tools and their bare hands instead of heavy machinery to extract bodies due to the grounds' instability. Mud mounds are estimated to be up to 5 metres high and rescuers are prepared to continue manually *—PTI*

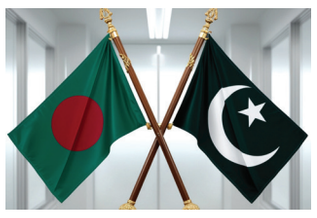
CONQUERING NEW HEIGHTS



Professional American rock climber Alex Honnold free solo climbed Taipei 101 without ropes or safety support. The 1,667-foot skyscraper is among the world's tallest buildings. Famous for his 2017 ascent of El Capitan, Honnold became the first known climber to scale Taipei 101 unroped. He completed the climb in one hour and 32 minutes, just two minutes slower than predicted, as Netflix live-streamed the feat to large crowds below. *—X*

Pakistan, Bangladesh eye closer trade ties

ISLAMABAD, 25 JAN



Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Sunday held a telephonic conversation with his Bangladeshi counterpart Mohammad Touhid Hossain, with both leaders reaffirming their commitment to build closer bilateral ties.

According to a statement issued by Pakistan's Foreign Office, the two ministers reviewed overall Pakistan-Bangladesh relations, with a particular focus on trade, economic cooperation and collaboration across multiple sectors. They agreed to strengthen engagement to unlock new areas of cooperation, the statement said.

The foreign ministers also exchanged views on current regional and international developments, underscoring the need for sustained dialogue to advance shared interests and promote regional peace and prosperity.

Pakistan and Bangladesh have been working to repair strained relations following years of tension during the tenure of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina. Since her ouster in August 2024, ties between the two countries have shown visible improvement.

The engagement includes reciprocal political and military visits, signalling willingness to reset. *—PTI*

Hindu youth sleeping in garage burnt alive in B'desh

DHAKA, 25 JAN

A 25-year-old Hindu youth, Chanchal Bhowmik, was burnt to death in Narsingdi, Bangladesh, on Friday night, triggering fresh concerns over minority safety in the country.

Bhowmik was sleeping inside a garage when a fire broke out. CCTV footage suggests possible foul play. Narsingdi Superintendent of Police Abdullah Al Faruque told ANI that while the fire originated inside the shop, footage showed a person moving around the area. "We are investigating whether the fire was caused by an electrical fault or by some external factor," he said.

The fire service broke open the shutter to rescue him, but his body was found charred.

Police said no arrests have been made so far.

The incident comes amid heightened political and security tensions as Bangladesh heads for national elections on 12 February, 2026. Communal violence has risen since the interim government led by Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus took charge in August 2024, following the ban on the Awami League.

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, speaking from exile, accused the Yunus administration of pushing Bangladesh into "an age of terror" and called on people to overthrow the regime.

Rights groups report a surge in attacks on minorities. In December alone, 51 incidents were recorded, including murders, arson, land grabs and assaults, according to the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council.

India's Ministry of External Affairs expressed deep concern, citing the over 2,900 minority violence incidents nationwide. *—ANI*

'China general threatened CCP's military control'

BEIJING, 25 JAN

PLA Daily, the Chinese military's mouthpiece, said the main reasons top military official Zhang Youxia and General Liu Zhenli are under investigation is for threatening the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) absolute leadership over the armed forces.

The two senior Chinese military officials were placed under investigation for serious violations of the ruling Communist Party's discipline and laws, the Defence Ministry said on Saturday.

The officials have severely fuelled political and corruption problems that threaten the Communist Party's absolute leadership over the armed forces and undermine the party's governance foundation, PLA said on Sunday.

The charge of threatening the party's absolute leadership is regarded as "very serious" as the Chinese military functions under the command of the CPC, which exercises absolute control of the armed forces.

Since taking leadership in 2012, President Xi Jinping—who also heads the military—has emphasised that the military must operate under party control.

Unlike other generals, Zhang, first-ranking Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, is the highest-ranking officer in China's military. Yet he was detained on Monday in a military corruption probe. *—PTI*

Nepali Congress sweeps polls, now largest Upper House party

KATHMANDU, 25 JAN

Nepal's National Assembly elections have concluded, with one candidate already elected unopposed and the final seat awaiting presidential nomination. Nepali Congress won 9 seats and is set to be the largest party.

lone Khas Arya seat in Koshi province filled unopposed by Congress leader Sunil Thapa, the Election Commission said.

Voting commenced on Sunday morning for 17 seats in the National Assembly, Nepal's Upper House, to replace lawmakers whose six-year terms expire this March.

One third of the National Assembly seats fall vacant every two years and are filled through elections. Eligible voters include provincial assembly members, mayors, deputy mayors, and chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of rural municipalities, each with different weightage.

On 12 September, acting on interim Prime Minister Sushila Karki's recommendation, the President dissolved the House of Representatives and announced the election.

Assembly has 59 members, eight elected and three nominated by the President.

The elections were necessitated after KP Sharma Oli resigned as prime minister on 9 September. Elections Lower House elections are scheduled for 5 March. *—PTI*

Nepal's Upper House Elections were necessitated after KP Sharma Oli resigned as PM following the Gen-z protests *PHOTO: SCREENBAR*

Voters line up to cast ballots at a polling station during the final round of general election on Sunday in Yangon, Myanmar *PHOTO: PTI*

Army certain of govt control amid Myanmar's final polls

YANGON, 25 JAN

The final round of general election voting began on Sunday in Myanmar. Military rulers and their allies are already ensured control a parliamentary majority to form the new government.

The army-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) having won most seats in the first two rounds, of the montlong three-round elections

Twenty-five per cent of the seats in the upper and lower houses are reserved for the military, guaranteeing it and its allies control of the legislature.

Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, who heads the current military government, is widely expected by both supporters and opponents to assume the presidency.

CRITICS ARE CALLING THE POLLS A "SHAM"

Malaysia's Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan said on Tuesday that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will not recognise Myanmar's elections, citing a lack of inclusive and free participation.

Critics say the polls are neither free nor fair, arguing they are being held under strict limits on public criticism to legitimise the military's rule following the 2021 ouster of Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government by Gen. Hlaing.

The takeover has triggered widespread opposition and a civil war, with security concerns having prevented voting in more than one-fifth of Myanmar's 330 townships, further reinforcing claims that the polls are neither free nor fair. *—PTI*

US envoys push Netanyahu on Gaza ceasefire phase two

CAIRO, 25 JAN

US envoys, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday, urging his government into the Gaza ceasefire's second phase.

Egypt's diplomat called for the key step of the phase—opening the Rafah crossing. Director of Donald Trump's new Board of Peace in Gaza, added for allowing Palestinians to enter and exit the territory.

Ali Shaath, head of a proposed technocratic government for Gaza, said the crossing would reopen in both directions next week. However, Israel has yet to confirm this, and the Gaza side of the crossing remains under Israeli military control.

The US wants to keep the Trump-brokered deal moving, while Netanyahu faces pressure to await Hamas returning the hostages' remains. Envoys are coordinating with him on recovery and Gaza demilitarisation, a US official said.

The family of Ran Gvili, whose body is still in Gaza, urged for more pressure on Hamas. However, Hamas said it has provided "all information" on Gvili's remains, and accused Israel of obstructing search efforts. *—PTI*

PUBLIC SHOOTING

Indian man shot dead in gang war in Canada's Burnaby

Minutes after Dilraj Singh Gill, 28, was found shot dead in Burnaby, British Columbia, police found a vehicle on fire several kilometres away, believed to be linked to the homicide. *PHOTO: Rcmp.ca*

BURNABY, 25 JAN

A 28-year-old Indian-origin man was shot dead in Burnaby, British Columbia, in an incident linked to the ongoing BC gang conflict, Canadian police have said.

The shooting happened shortly before 5.30pm on 22 January near the 3,700 block of Canada Way, according to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Officers responded to gunfire reports and found a male victim with critical injuries. Despite efforts to save him, he was pronounced dead.

Minutes later, police located a vehicle on fire in the 5000 block of Buxton Street, several kilometres from the scene. The authorities are treating this burned vehicle as connected to the homicide.

The Integrated Homicide Investigation Team (IHIT) has identified the victim as Dilraj Singh Gill, a Vancouver resident. "At this time, IHIT investigators believe that this was a targeted shooting," police said. " Gill was known to police, and the shooting appears to have a nexus to the BC gang conflict."

Sergeant Freda Fong said the community remains unsettled, stating, "A shooting, especially in a public place, is extremely troubling, not only for the police but for the entire community." Investigators are working with Burnaby RCMP and forensic teams to reconstruct events.

Police believe the suspect or suspects fled shortly after the shooting, possibly using the burning vehicle. *—Agencies*

India's luxury housing mkt may cool down in FY27

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Demand and prices of luxury homes may cool down across major cities next fiscal as indicated by 56 per cent of wealthy respondents in a survey conducted by property consultant India Sotheby's International Realty. The consultant conducted a survey of 700 high net worth individuals (HNIs) and ultra HNIs to assess their sentiments towards India's economic growth prospects, investment strategies and outlook for luxury housing market. In its latest report, 'The India Luxury Residential Outlook 2026' released on Sunday, India Sotheby's International Realty mentioned that 67 per cent of HNIs and UHNIs remain bullish on India's growth story despite global headwinds. 72 per cent of HNIs and UHNIs expect GDP growth to be 6-7 per cent range in FY27.*—PTI*

Govt extends BIS deadline on aluminium cans

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

The government has extended the timeline for the rollout of mandatory BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) quality control norms for aluminium cans used in the food processing and beverages industry, providing relief to alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverage makers, from cola makers to beer brewers. The alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverage makers said that the extension will help to bridge the gap between demand and supply ahead of the peak summer season. "It will help alcobev companies prepare for the summer when the demand for beer and soft drinks shoots up," Brewers Association of India said in a statement.*—PTI*

NHAI aims to slash debt below Rs 2 lakh crore

NNEW DELHI, 25 JAN

State-owned National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is aiming to cut its debt to below Rs 2 lakh crore in the current financial year ending March, a senior government official said on Sunday. NHAI's debt had peaked at Rs 3.5 lakh crore in 2021–22 but had fallen to Rs 2,35,947 crore as of 31 December, 2025. "In line with government policy, NHAI has not borrowed since 2023, reducing its debt liability by around 32 per cent," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. To accelerate debt reduction, NHAI has prepaid Rs 86,000 crore, including Rs 50,000 crore of National Small Savings Fund loans.*—PTI*

Coal India arm asks staff to ramp up production

KOLKATA, 25 JAN

Coal India subsidiary Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL) has urged its employees to enhance production in the final quarter of the current fiscal, citing shortfalls in cumulative output till December. ECL CMD Satish Jha said cumulative coal production up to December 2025 stood at 33.482 million tonnes, below the target of 38.752 million tonnes. ECL, however, said it remained on a strong operational footing, supported by robust overburden removal of 133.013 million cubic metres during the period, which it described as a key area of strength enabling higher coal output. Cumulative coal offtake during April-December stood at 33.666 million tonnes.*—PTI*

India pivots crude sourcing for certainty

Russian crude import falls to around 1.1M bpd in January; India now prefers Middle East

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

India's crude oil sourcing strategy has shown a shift toward lower-risk and more execution-reliable supply, with the Middle Eastern barrels gaining share as Russian crude flows remain selective.

Import of Russian crude oil dropped to around 1.1 million barrels per day in January, from an average of 1.21 million bpd in December and over 2 million bpd imports in mid-2025, real-time analytics company Kpler said.

Iraq supplies almost the same volumes as Russia, up from 9,04,000 bpd in December 2025. Volumes from Saudi Arabia too have risen to 9,24,000 bpd this month.

Russia became India's top crude supplier in 2022 after Indian refiners purchased discounted Russian oil that was left stranded when Europe and other Western buyers turned away following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Russian crude rose from under 1 per cent of India's imports to roughly 40 per cent at its peak.

Energy security and diversification are shaping the narrative, but refinery economics drives the decision-making.

Iraq supplies almost the same volume of cride oil as Russia, up from 9,04,000 bpd in December, 2025. Volumes from Saudi Arabia too have increased to 9,24,000 bpd in January this year *PHOTO: ANI*

India's Russian crude purchases in January 2026 and across Q1 2026 are expected to average around 1.2 million bpd (January) and 1.3-1.5 million bpd (Q1).

The Middle East inflows rise as refiners prioritise supply reliability, flexibility and smoother cargo execution. This shift also supports operational stability for refiners.

Indian refiners such as Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) are buying Russian oil from non-sanctioned entities. There are indications that Reliance too may soon resume purchases from non-sanctioned entities.

That is primarily because Russian crude remains compelling on price. Urals is currently trading at a significantly wider discount than earlier in the fourth quarter. *—ANI*

Top firms' mcap dips by Rs 2.51L cr; Reliance loses

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

The combined market valuation of nine of the top-10 most valued firms slumped by Rs 2,51,711.6 lakh crore last week, with Reliance Industries taking the biggest hit, as India shifts towards lower-risk and more reliable souce of crude oil and weak trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 2,032.65 points or 2.43 per cent.

"Markets witnessed a sharp sell-off during the week, with bears firmly in control. Weak global cues, persistent FII outflows, a panic regarding the depreciating rupee, and subdued corporate earnings kept pressure elevated throughout the week," Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

These firms included Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Bharti Airtel.

The market valuation of Reliance Industries tumbled Rs 96,960.17 crore to Rs 18,75,533.04 crore.

ICICI Bank's valuation eroded by Rs 48,644.99 crore to Rs 9,60,825.29 crore.

The valuation of HDFC Bank tanked Rs 22,923.02 crore to Rs 14,09,611.89 crore and that of Bharti Airtel diminished by Rs 17,533.97 crore to Rs 11,32,010.46 crore.

Market capitalisation (mcap) of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) dropped by Rs 16,588.93 crore to Rs 11,43,623.19 crore and that of Larsen & Toubro tanked Rs 15,248.32 crore to Rs 5,15,161.91 crore.

Mcap of Bajaj Finance declined by Rs 14,093.93 crore to Rs 5,77,353.23 crore and that of State Bank of India edged lower by Rs 11,907.5 crore to Rs 9,50,199.77 crore.

Market valuation of Infosys dived Rs 7,810.77 crore to Rs 6,94,078.82 crore. *—ANI*

Rupee dips 92: Imports, edu, travel to get dearer

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

PHOTO: ANI

With the rupee hitting a historic low of 92 against the US dollar on 23 January it is likely to make imports ranging from crude oil to electronic goods, overseas education and foreign travel costlier, stoke inflation concerns, but may offer some relief to exporters.

The local currency has slumped by 202 paise, or over 2 per cent, so far this month. In 2025, it had plunged 5 per cent on unabated foreign fund outflows and dollar strength.

A depreciating rupee entails importers will have to shell out more for the same quantity and price.

India is 85 per cent dependent on crude oil imported from other countries to meet its needs for fuels, such as petrol, diesel and jet fuel.

However, it is a relief for the Indian exporters as they receive more rupees in exchange for dollars.

Here is how a continuously weakening rupee is likely to impact spending.

A weaker rupee against the US dollar means foreign education becomes more expensive, as students will have to pay more rupees for every dollar charged by overseas institutions.

A weaker local currency means one has to pay more rupees to buy one US dollar for travel expenses.

Non-resident Indians (NRIs) who send money back home will end up sending more in the rupee value.

For the high import dependent sectors such as gems and jewellery and electronics, the cost of imported inputs may partly offset the currency advantage, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) said. *—PTI*

Uganda, Iran use Dorsey's Bitchat amid net shutdown

KAMPALA, 25 JAN

A non-descript offline messaging app until recently, has become an important mode of communication for the people of Uganda and Iran where the government shut down internet ahead of the presidential elections and to quell nationwide protest, said sources.

According to a Reuters report, the messaging app-Bitchat-launched by Twitter, now called X, co-founder Jack Dorsey, does not require internet or cellular connectivity.

The messaging app uses Bluetooth mesh technology to create a decentralised, offline network where a message from one person uses another person's phone as a stepping stone to hop the text along until it reaches the destination.

The Bluetooth-based messaging services have over the years become a go-to option for protesters as governments increasingly impose internet shutdowns, the report said.

The Bhuetooth based messaging service has become a go-to option for protesters as governments impose internet shutdown *PHOTO: x*

Bitchat has surged to the top of Apple and Google app stores in the African country after clocking more than 28,000 downloads this year, according to research firm Apptopia. The development marks a nearly fourfold increase over the previous two months combined, according to the report.

Bobi Wine, a Ugandan pop star and main opposition candidate, urged people late last month to download Bitchat, saying the government was planning a web shutdown soon to ensure citizens "do not organise, verify their election results." *—Agencies*

'Budget, Fed interest, Q3 results to steer market'

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Stock market is gearing up for an eventful week ahead where key triggers such as quarterly earnings from corporates, the US Fed interest rate decision and the upcoming Union Budget for 2026-27 are expected to grab the limelight.

According to market analysts the trading activity of foreign investors, rupee-dollar trend and global trade related developments would also influence trading in the markets.

Equity markets would be closed on Monday for Republic Day. While Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Budget on 1 February, a Sunday, the NSE and BSE will conduct live trading.

"On the domestic front, markets will track industrial production data, government budget-related fiscal indicators, and weekly foreign exchange reserves. The earnings season will also gain momentum, with key results from heavyweights. *—PTI*

Global economy faces uncertainty, says WEF Outlook

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

The global economy is expected to face a challenging year in 2026, according to the World Economic Forum's latest Chief Economists' Outlook released this month.

The survey showed that 53 per cent of chief economists expect the world economy to slow down, while only 19 per cent see stronger growth ahead.

Rising risks from high debt levels, inflated asset prices, and ongoing geopolitical tensions continue to weigh on the outlook. Trade disputes and shifting alliances are also reshaping global investment and supply chains.

Financial markets have remained strong despite these risks, especially in the United States, where stocks linked to artificial intelligence (AI) have surged.

However, economists are divided on whether these high valuations can last.

Spending on defence, digital infrastructure, and energy is expected to rise, while budgets for education, social protection and environmental programmes may face pressure.

Countries are turning to bilateral trade agreements for access to resources. AI will be both an opportunity and source of disruption. *—ANI*

India's Forex reserves rise over $14B to $701B

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

India's foreign exchange reserves rose by USD 14.167 billion in the week ending 16 January, to USD 701.360 billion, , the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) 'Weekly Statistical Supplement' data showed.

This was driven by a jump in both gold reserves and foreign currency assets.

For the reported week, India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the largest component of foreign exchange reserves, stood at USD 560.518 billion, up USD 9.652 billion.

Gold reserves stand at USD 117.454 billion, up USD 4.623 billion from the previous week.

The price of the safe-haven asset gold has been on a sharp uptrend over recent months, amid heightened global uncertainties and robust investment demand.

The RBI had said that the country's foreign exchange reserves were sufficient to cover more than 11 months of merchandise imports.

India's external sector remains resilient and is expected tp meet external financing requirements.

In 2025, the forex kitty has increased by about 56 billion, according to data.

Foreign exchange reserves are assets held by a nation's central bank. The RBI often intervenes by managing liquidity, including selling dollars, to prevent a depreciation of the rupee. *—ANI*

Vedanta seeks boost for unused iron ore

NEW EDLHI, 25 JAN

Vedanta's iron ore mining arm, Sesa Goa, has urged the government to provide incentives for low-grade iron ore beneficiation, emphasising that targeted policy support and infrastructure investment are critical to make the processing economically viable and to expand the sector.

The low-grade iron ore beneficiation process enhances the iron content of low-quality ores by removing impurities like silica, alumina, and phosphorus, thereby making them suitable for steel production.

With India's steel demand projected to reach 300 million tonnes by 2030, unlocking low-grade reserves through beneficiation could boost domestic supply security, create jobs, and add billions to government revenues via expanded mining and exports.

Stressing the requirement for long-term investment to upgrade into higher-grade feedstock for domestic steel production, Jaju said, "There is a very urgent need to bring some kind of beneficial duty structure or incentive structure to beneficiate this material."

India produced 289 million tonnes of iron ore in FY25, with exports hitting record highs, but beneficiation capacity lags at under 20 per cent of the potential. He urged a timebound framework in the upcoming Union Budget to incentivise beneficiation, potentially transforming low-grade waste into a strategic asset. *—PTI*

HCL WINS BID FOR MP COPPER BLOCK

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

State-run Hindustan Copper Ltd (HCL) has emerged as the preferred bidder for the Baghwari–Khirkhori Copper and Associated Mineral Block in Madhya Pradesh after offering the highest final price in a forward e-auction. The auction for the grant of a composite licence-cum-mining lease concluded on 22 January, with HCL receiving official communication, the company said

The bidding followed a Notice Inviting Tender issued by the Madhya Pradesh Directorate of Geology and Mining. A Mini Ratna CPSE under the Ministry of Mines, HCL is the country's only copper ore miner, having mines in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Jharkhand. *—PTI*

Skoda Auto Volkswagen seeks policy stability, duty reforms

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Skoda Auto Volkswagen India MD and CEO Piyush Arora has said policy continuity, infrastructure expansion and a stronger electric vehicle ecosystem are crucial for sustaining growth in the automotive sector. Speaking to PTI ahead of the Union Budget, he said customs duty reforms and bilateral trade agreements would support global integration. Arora noted that last year's GST reforms helped revive the passenger vehicle market and called for clarity on electric vehicle duties and the delayed Corporate Average Fuel Economy norms. He said the proposed India-EU free trade agreement could create opportunities for brands such as Skoda, Volkswagen and Audi. Arora added that the group remains focused on deep localisation while exploring electric vehicle introductions. *—PTI*

TO START IN DELHI

Metal refiner targets silver recycling amid demand

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Precious metals refiner MMTC-PAMP plans to launch a silver recycling pilot within three months as rising demand threatens supply-side constraints, the company's Managing Director and CEO Samit Guha said. The pilot will likely begin in Delhi, utilising existing stores equipped for gold recycling.

Guha noted that global mine production shows no significant expansion despite surging demand. "If silver demand keeps going the way it is, we could have serious supply-side constraints. Eventually, recycled silver will have to play a bigger role to fill this gap," he told PTI. He urged the government to encourage recycling, noting Indian households hold an estimated 250,000 tonnes of silver.

The company operates 20 stores and plans to double this count over five years. Upgrading equipment and training staff will facilitate the shift. Beyond recycling, MMTC-PAMP aims to increase minting capacity from 2.4 million to 3.6 million coins and expand its digital commerce footprint.

Silver prices recently hit a record £3,130 (Rs 3,34,300) per kg in India. Guha observed that silver returns have doubled those of gold over the past year. "From an investment point of view, silver has become a new gold," he said, citing its lower entry point for investors. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Indonesia Masters 2026: Tang Jie-Ee Wei wins title

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Malaysia's top mixed doubles pair, Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei, created history by winning the Indonesia Masters 2026 title today. The world number four pair defeated Denmark's Mathias Christiansen and Alexandra Boje 15-21, 21-17, 21-11 in a 57-minute final at Istora Senayan. They faced a tough challenge after losing the first set 15-21 and trailed 10-12 in the second. The third seeds then staged a brilliant comeback, scoring six consecutive points to lead 16-12 before closing the set 21-17 to force a decider. With confidence fully restored, Tang Jie and Ee Wei dominated the third set, sealing a 21-11 victory when Boje hit a shot into the net.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Coyle returns to Jamshedpur FC on a two-season deal

JAMSHEDPUR, 25 JAN

Indian Super League club Jamshedpur FC has re-appointed England's Owen Coyle as head coach on a two-season contract. The appointment of Coyle, who guided the Men of Steel to their historic ISL League Winners' Shield in the 2021–22 season, marked his return to JFC, the football club said in a statement here on Sunday. Coyle's return marks a significant move for the club, with the coach being widely remembered for delivering one of the most memorable campaigns in Jamshedpur FC's history. Under his guidance, Jamshedpur topped the league stage in 2021–22 with 43 points (13 wins, four draws, and three losses), scoring 43 goals and conceding 23, to clinch the club's first-ever Shield.—*PTI*

KIWG 2026: ITBP win women's ice-hockey gold

LEH, 25 JAN

Ladakh ran out of luck as ITBP women reclaimed the Khelo India Winter Games ice-hockey gold at the Nawang Dorjay Stobdan (NDS) Stadium here on Sunday. In a thrilling match, ITBP scored in the opening seconds of extra time after regulation time ended 1-1. There was a small consolation for the hosts on the penultimate day of the 6th Khelo India Winter Games, as Ladakh's men redeemed themselves by winning the men's ice hockey bronze after a dramatic Saturday when unfancied Chandigarh stunned the home team 3-2 in the semifinals. But on Sunday, Ladakh men looked more purposeful, carving out a fighting 3-2 win for a podium finish. Ladakh had beaten ITBP 3-1 in the league stage as well.—*PTI*

Housemaid accuses Abdul Qadir's son of sexual assault

LAHORE, 25 JAN

A housemaid has accused Sulaman Qadir, son of former Pakistan leg-spinner Abdul Qadir, of sexually assaulting her at his farmhouse. The police have detained Sulaman, one of the four sons of Qadir, after the maid filed an FIR with the police. The maid has alleged in her FIR that she worked at the house of Sulaman, and he forcibly took her to his farmhouse and raped her. A police official said she had been sent for a medical check-up, after which it would be confirmed if she had been sexually assaulted. The 41-year old Sulaman has played 26 first-class and 40 List A matches between 2005 and 2013.—*PTI*

Alcaraz enters 3rd consecutive quarterfinal

Maaya, Paparkar bow out with opening round defeats

MELBOURNE, 25 JAN

Carlos Alcaraz eased into his third successive Australian Open quarterfinals on Sunday, doling out another Grand Slam beatdown for American Tommy Paul in a match disrupted by a medical emergency in the crowd.

Having thrashed Paul in last year's French Open quarterfinals and beaten him in four sets at Wimbledon in 2024, the World No. 1 gave the 19th seed a hard-court humbling with a 7-6(6), 6-4, 7-5 win in the afternoon sunshine at Rod Laver Arena.

"He started pretty strong .... I knew I was going to have my chances, and I think I did that," Alcaraz said on court.

"Overall, it was a really high level of tennis from both sides, but really happy I got it in straight sets."

Maaya, Paparkar bow out with opening round defeats

India's singles challenge at the junior Australian Open ended in a matter of hours with Maaya Rajeshwaran Ravathi and Arnav Paparkar losing their respective opening round matches here on Sunday.

Maaya, competing in the girls' singles, struggled to find her rhythm against Anna Pushkareva and went down 4-6, 1-6 in a match that lasted just over an hour. In the boys' singles, Paparkar too made an early exit, losing 3-6, 4-6 to American Vihan Reddy.

Gauff reaches quarterfinals

American third seed Coco Gauff weathered a three-set

thriller to beat Karolina Muchova 6-1, 3-6, 6-3 and advance to the Australian Open quarterfinals on Sunday, extending her perfect record against the Czech player to five straight wins.

The result bodes well for the American, who has won every tournament in which she has beaten Muchova, including the 2023 U.S. Open.

Zverev takes out Cerundolo

Alexander Zverev defeated Francisco Cerundolo 6-2, 6-4, 6-4 to confirm his status as a perennial title contender at the Australian Open. Last year's finalist was in clinical form on Sunday, dismantling the world No 21 in exactly two hours.

For the 28-year-old German, this victory represents a significant tactical breakthrough; after losing his first three career meetings against Cerundolo in 2024 and 2025, Zverev has now won the last three encounters, maintaining a perfect 3-0 record against the Argentinian on hard courts.

Ten-time champion **Novak Djokovic** reached the Australian Open quarterfinals without striking a ball Sunday after his last-16 opponent Jakub Mensik withdrew.

The pair were due to play in a night match on centre court on Monday, but "super sad" Czech star Mensik pulled out with an abdominal injury.

His withdrawal means Djokovic will play Italian fifth seed Lorenzo Musetti or American ninth seed Taylor Fritz for a place in the semifinals. —*PTI*

WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

RCB seek quick rebound, MI fight for revival

VADODARA, 25 JAN

Table-toppers Royal Challengers Bengaluru will look to bounce back from their first setback of the season when they take on struggling Mumbai Indians in a Women's Premier League match here on Monday.

RCB's unbeaten run came to an end on Saturday as they suffered their first loss of the campaign in the match against Delhi Capitals, a timely reminder that momentum can shift quickly in the business end of the league.

Despite the defeat, Bengaluru remain well-placed at the top of the standings, having shown consistency across departments through the tournament, and will be keen to quickly put the loss behind them as the playoffs draw closer.

Mumbai Indians, on the other hand, find themselves in urgent need of revival. The defending champions have lost three matches in a row, a slide that has stalled their campaign and put their playoff aspirations under pressure.

MI's concern has largely been inconsistency, particularly in closing out key moments, while RCB will be eager to iron out the issues exposed in their previous outing.

For RCB, skipper Smriti Mandhana has led from the front with consistent runs at the top, while Nadine de Klerk has been the side's reliable all-round contributor.

RCB will expect more from their middle order, with Richa Ghosh and Radha Yadav needing to convert starts into match-defining knocks, especially after the batting stumbled in their previous outing.

Mumbai Indians have relied heavily on Nat Sciver-Brunt, who has been their standout performer with both bat and ball, while captain Harmanpreet Kaur has played a few impactful cameos. Amelia Kerr has also chipped in with timely wickets, keeping MI competitive despite the losses. The match starts at 7:30 pm. —*PTI*

India chase down 154 in 10 overs; Abhishek Sharma joins record books

GUWAHATI, 25 JAN

India opener Abhishek Sharma has entered the record books, smashing the second-fastest half-century by an Indian in the third T20I against New Zealand in Guwahati on Sunday. Abhishek smashed his fifty in just 14 deliveries.

Chasing 154, India have reached 139/2 in 9 overs, with Abhishek and captain Suryakumar Yadav at the crease. It is also India's second-highest T20I powerplay score. Ishan Kishan made a fiery 28 off 13, but opener Sanju Samson departed for a golden duck.

Earlier, an excellent bowling performance by India helped them restrict New Zealand to just 153/9 in 20 overs. Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah scalped three wickets. Wrist-spinner Ravi Bishnoi, playing his first T20I in nearly a year, impressed with two wickets.

Abhishek Sharma and Suryakumar Yadav *PHOTO: PTI*

All-rounder Hardik Pandya also picked up two and grabbed a superhuman catch in the very first over.

For New Zealand, Glenn Phillips (48) and Mark Chapman (32) have been the only contributors of note. Hosts India are aiming to seal series victory today, entering the game with a 2-0 lead in the five-match T20I series

Brief Scores:

New Zealand: 153 for 9 in 20 overs (Glenn Phillips 48; Jasprit Bumrah 3/17).

India: 155 for 2 in 10 overs (Abhishek Sharma 68, Suryakumar Yadav 57; Matt Henry 2/28). —*PTI*

TATA STEEL MASTERS

Gukesh, Erigaisi lose in Round 7; Pragg manages a draw

WIJK AAN ZEE, 25 JAN

It was a tough day for the Indians at the ongoing Tata Steel Masters 2026, taking place in Wijk Aan Zee, Netherlands, as three of them suffered losses in the seventh round on Saturday.

World champion D. Gukesh faced another setback after losing a second consecutive game, this time against Anish Giri, while local hero GM Jorden van Foreest outplayed GM Aravindh Chithambaram.

Arjun Erigaisi, too, slumped to a loss, succumbing to 14-year-old GM Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus, who won a second game in a row.

In a round that featured four wins, R. Praggnanandhaa managed to salvage a draw with GM Matthias Bluebaum.

Meanwhile, Nodirbek Abdusattorov extended his lead by a point after defeating Vincent Keymer with black pieces, taking his tally to 5.5 points.

Javokhir Sindrov secured half a point to take second with 4.5.

Gukesh and Erigaisi sit joint-fifth with three points each, while Praggnanandhaa is in joint-sixth with 2.5. Chithambaram finds himself at the bottom of the table with two points.

In the eighth round on Sunday, Gukesh takes on Vladimir Fedoseev, Chithambaram faces Arjun in an all-Indian clash, while Praggnanandhaa meets Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus. —*PTI*

Saudi Arabia postpones 2029 Asian Winter Games

DUBAI, 25 JAN

Saudi Arabia's Olympic Committee and the Olympic Council of Asia have agreed to indefinitely postpone the 2029 Asian Winter Games, which were to have been held in a mountain resort in Saudi Arabia's futuristic city project NEOM.

In a statement released Saturday, the Olympic Council of Asia said the two bodies had agreed "to an updated framework for future hosting" of the games, which will be postponed "to a later date to be announced in due course." It did not provide a reason.

Instead, Saudi Arabia will host a series of standalone winter sports events in the coming years, the statement said. It added that the decision came after "extensive consultations between the two organizations and reflects a shared strategic commitment to the long-term and sustainable development of winter sports in Saudi Arabia and across the West Asia region."

The games were to have been held in Trojena, planned as a year-round ski resort in the mountains of NEOM, a $500 billion project to build a new city in Saudi Arabia's western desert on the Red Sea. —*PTI*

MP spinners consign K'taka to 217-run defeat

BENGALURU, 25 JAN

Spinners Saransh Jain and Sagar Solanki shared six wickets between them equally as Madhya Pradesh handed Karnataka a heavy 217-run defeat on the fourth and final day of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group B match here on Sunday.

Saransh Jain *PHOTO: PTI*

But off-spinner Jain (3/37) and left-arm spinner Solanki (3/20) ran through the Karnataka batting line-up to fold them for 144 in their second innings.

Opener KV Aneesh, who made a 92 in the first innings, made a 57 (142 balls) to offer a token fight for Karnataka.

Nair did not come out to bat as Nikin Jose was employed in the form of a concussion substitute. Jose fought hard with a 101-ball 26 but eventually Jain trapped him in front of the wicket.

The win helped MP move up to second place with 22 points, while Karnataka (21 points) slipped from the top to third spot.

Maharashtra, which beat Goa by eight wickets, climbed to the top of the table with 24 points.

Brief Scores:

At Alur: Madhya Pradesh: 323 and 229/8 declared in 75.1 overs beat Karnataka: 191 and 144 all out in 67.5 overs (KV Aneesh 57; Saransh Jain 3/37, Sagar Solanki 3/20) by 217 runs.

At Pune: Goa: 209 all out and 248 all out lost to Maharashtra: 350 and 109/2 in 21.1 overs 9 (Arshin Kulkarni 52 not out) by 8 wickets. —*PTI*

Rohit and Kaur conferred with Padma Shri

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Tennis legend Vijay Amritraj, World Cup-winning captains Rohit Sharma and Harmanpreet Kaur were among the prominent sportspersons honoured in the Padma Awards for 2026, announced on Sunday.

Amritraj was the only sportsperson to receive the Padma Bhushan this year. India's third-highest civilian honour, the award recognises his pioneering role in putting Indian tennis on the global map during the amateur and early Open Era.

A former Davis Cup stalwart, Amritraj had earlier received the Padma Shri in 1983 and the Arjuna Award in 1974. He had reached the singles quarterfinals at Wimbledon and the US Open twice and later served Indian sport in various administrative and ambassadorial roles.several sportspersons named for the Padma Shri, India's fourth-highest civilian honour. —*PTI*

LA LIGA

Mbappé's brace at Villarreal lifts Real Madrid

BARCELONA, 25 JAN

Despite a coaching change and some poor play that irked its fans, Real Madrid returned to the top of La Liga after Kylian Mbappé scored a brace in a 2-0 win at Villarreal on Saturday night.

Mbappé scored early in the second half and added an injury-time penalty to ensure Madrid rose two points above Barcelona, which will need to beat bottom side Real Oviedo at home on Sunday to reclaim first place.

Those were Mbappe's La Liga-leading 20th and 21st goals in 20 appearances by the France star.

Madrid has stayed close to

Mbappe's La Liga-leading 20th and 21st goals in 20 appearances by the France star *PHOTO: PTI*

Barcelona even though it has not been playing up to the standards of its demanding club executives and supporters.

The club fired coach Xabi Alonso after it lost to Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final two weeks ago, only for the team to also endure an embarrassing exit to a second-tier team in the Copa del Rey in the debut of his replacement, Álvaro Arbeloa. The sudden coaching change and poor play sparked fan protests during Madrid's last two home games, a pair of wins in La Liga and the Champions League.

But a loss by Barcelona at Real Sociedad last weekend opened the door for Madrid to slip ahead at Villarreal. And now Arbeloa has overseen three comfortable victories in a row. —*PTI*

RANDHIR'S TENURE AS OCA CHIEF TO END

NEW DELHI, 25 JAN

Veteran Indian sports administrator Randhir Singh's tenure as Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) president will come to a premature end as his ill-health necessitated the election of a new head of the continental body during its General Assembly in Tashkent on Monday.

In September 2024, Randhir became the first Indian to be elected as OCA president during the 44th General Assembly of the continental body here. He was elected as OCA president for a four-year term till 2028. —*PTI*